

2. THE DRUG MARKET IN BULGARIA

2.1. FORMATION OF THE DRUG MARKETS IN THE 1980s AND THE 1990s

Although Bulgaria lies on the heroin trail to Western Europe, up until the mid-1990s heroin was available only to a limited number of users.³⁵ The number of registered drug addicts in 1989 was 1,300–1,400,³⁶ but those were dependent on medical opiates, such as lidocaine and morphine. These substances were extremely hard to access—users stole them from pharmacies, smuggled them out of hospitals with the help of medical personnel or bought them with counterfeit prescriptions. Marijuana was hardly popular, and despite the favorable local climate it was rarely grown. So were synthetic drugs—since the early 1980s state-owned pharmaceutical companies produced huge amounts of amphetamine under the trade name Captagon,³⁷ which was not familiar to the wider population. Nearly 100 % of the produce was exported to the Middle East, though amphetamines were sometimes taken by university students during the exam season to enhance concentration and brain effectiveness, supplied by workers who stole the pills from the factory. Among the explanations of why Bulgaria did not develop a domestic drug market up until 1990 is that this possibility was warded off by the totalitarian police apparatus. Alternatively, secret services may have held the drug channels through the country under their control, etc.

An outbreak of drug use in Bulgaria was observed immediately after the democratic changes in 1989 and the dissolution of total state control. As the country became politically and economically open, and foreign crime groups were able to enter and integrate the newly sprung domestic criminal enterprises into trans-border drug networks, drug markets could freely develop and thrive in the 1990s. The increased traffic along the drug routes crossing the country fostered the formation of territorially and hierarchically structured local drug distribution networks. Drugs rapidly penetrated most Bulgarian towns and street dealing proliferated, particularly around schools. The drug market in the post-communist transition period displayed the following distinctive traits:

³⁵ In the three consecutive surveys of drug addicts (in 2003, 2004, and 2005), none of the respondents interviewed who had used drugs prior to 1990 had used heroin.

³⁶ Some experts claim that their actual number prior to 1990 could not have exceeded 600-800 people. The numbers 1,300–1,400 refer to all people registered since the early 1980s. A sizeable share of those have either quit using drugs, are undergoing compulsory treatment or are serving a sentence in prison with no access to drugs.

³⁷ Amphetamines started to be produced in Bulgaria in 1981 when the Commission for Permission of Medical Drugs licensed the production of Captagon. In October 1981, the state-owned pharmaceutical company Pharmachim placed an order with the R&D Office of the Chemical and Pharmaceutical Plants in Sofia to develop a production technology for Captagon tablets. Later on, three separate production lines were engaged—the pharmaceutical plant in the town of Dupnitsa (formerly Stanke Dimitrov), the plant in Sofia's Iliyantsi district, and the Scientific Institute for Chemical and Pharmaceutical Research—NIHFI JSC located in Darvenitsa district.

- **Steady growth** throughout the period of the four basic markets (of heroin, marijuana, synthetic drugs, cocaine) with recurrent drug outbreaks; changing proportions of each submarket on the overall market due to the constant transfer of addicts and new recruits between them.
- Strong linkages between the drug market and the rest of the black **markets operated by organized crime**, but with a degree of autonomy, as it is characterized by the highest level of risk (together with prostitution, contract murders, trafficking of people, etc.).
- Strong presence of money laundering schemes for drug trafficking and distribution incomes through the creation of **corrupt networks** involving law-enforcement, judiciary, and government officials.
- Pronounced impact of the heroin market on the structure of the overall drug market due to its strong addictive effect on users. The trends on the domestic heroin market are closely linked to trans-border heroin trafficking processes, the overall drug consumption in the country, the development of local crime organizations and their penetration into corruption schemes.

Thus, in the 1990s the heroin market was the most tightly structured segment. After a short initial period when heroin was imported and distributed by foreign nationals, mostly of Middle Eastern origin, domestic organized crime overtook both the heroin transit channels and in-country sales. Geographically, the heroin market grew from the capital, toward larger cities, down to the smaller and re-moter places.

Structural developments were related to the major criminal players and the ways the market was (re)distributed between them. Alongside the widespread monopolies by single drug network owners over a whole area (town or neighborhood served by a single police force) joint ownership was also practiced—either by two independent distributors or through partnership with a more powerful criminal group. The latter had several varieties – protection of the area for a fixed fee or exclusive supplies from a particular crime structure. Redistribution was achieved through any of the typical approaches of the business—demonstration of force, threatening, talks and negotiations often accompanied by brutality and violence.

The expansion of heroin and other drug markets was essentially dependent on distribution networks' safety from investigation and penal measures. This was achieved through a tight scheme of "reporting" by upper-level drug distributors to a number of corrupt law-enforcement officers, criminal investigators and prosecutors and even judges, bonded with the drug distribution structures. Thus, drug market profits were distributed in a strictly stratified manner, often through the intermediary of the so called "black lawyers", specifically involved in counseling the drug structures.

A series of decisive government measures in the late 1990s targeting organized crime, in a well-intentioned attempt to "cut off the lizard's tail",³⁸ as it was then

³⁸ The origin of this expression is discussed in Chapter 1.

popularly illustrated, managed to oust criminal players from a number of gray markets. Many of them, however, continued on the black market, and some took up drug distribution in particular. During this period there was a boom in synthetic drug use as a more social type of drug contrasting to the social withdrawal typical of heroin use. Because of this characteristic of amphetamines and ecstasy their sales proliferated in discos and night clubs. In addition, addiction was milder and easier to handle. Thus, synthetic drugs became inseparable from youth entertainment styles. Because of this, the former racketeer groups managed to penetrate the market through buying out a number of nightlife venues in the big cities.

Due to the fast growth of the market of marijuana in schools (which peaked in the late 1990s as well) soft drugs became most widespread in the country. The increasingly lax school discipline and parental control also contributed to its fast-growing popularity among friends as an easily accessible substitute for tobacco and alcohol. Moreover, in contrast to a number of European countries that have long decriminalized marijuana on the basis of strong rational arguments, public tolerance in Bulgaria is rather low, and in a way stimulates consumption. Thus, a well-ordered distribution system grew around schools with criminal enterprises controlling numerous pushers selling to students, and suppliers/distributors working for that particular segment.

One major trait concerning the formative stage of the Bulgarian drug market in the last decade is its dire legacy of impunity. Drug dealers, and especially high-level bosses remain untouchable by law-enforcement and they would much more often become victim to turf struggle than get hunted down and convicted.

2.2. THE DRUG MARKET – STATE OF PLAY, TRENDS AND RISKS. TYPES OF DRUG MARKETS

The late 1990's saw the establishment of the four major markets of illegal psychoactive substances – heroin, marijuana, amphetamines, and cocaine. The main features of the Bulgarian drug market have persisted ever since, notwithstanding the clashes in the supply chains, the drug wars, and the dramatic changes in the demand patterns.

2.2.1. *The Heroin Market: Types of Consumption, Structure and Organization of Heroin Dealing after 2001*

The heroin dealing has been formative of the structure of the entire drug market in this country since the mid 1990's. Due to the strong physiological and psychic dependence it generates, its daily use is stable and, for all practical purposes, it does not depend on any weekly or seasonal fluctuations. Thus the contingent of users has become quite substantial for the size of the country and the geographical proximity of Bulgaria and Turkey³⁹ makes its importation almost free of any problems. The opportunity to have a great number of young people (many heroin

³⁹ The huge flows of goods and passengers across the Bulgarian-Turkish border make the routine transfer of heroin practically undetectable.

addicts among them) who tend to apply extreme forms of violence plays a major role in maintaining the influence of the old extortionist entrepreneurs. The elimination of the extortionist protection money payment makes it difficult to maintain the old punitive brigades resorting to massive violence and consisting of former athletes. The opportunities provided by heroin dealing structures enable organized criminal networks to control (in some regions of the country) the market in the other drugs (marijuana, amphetamines and cocaine) and to rule the local black and gray markets, such as prostitution, real estate fraud, gray imports and sales of fuel, Chinese and Turkish consumer goods, purchase of farm produce, etc.

A possible point of departure to analyze the heroin market structure in Bulgaria is the use of the division of organized crime⁴⁰ into two types – the predatory model and the market type. Interviews with police officers⁴¹ specialized in drug enforcement, street dealers and well-known names in the underground world make it clear that the heroin market builds on two principles. The **hierarchical** principle is similar to the classical model of organization and discharge described for New York in 1969 by Preble and Casey.⁴² The other principle of organization is **zoning**: in the beginning of the decade, most of the country was divided into territories each being dominated by a criminal structure.

The Hierarchical Principle

When describing the two principles of organization of drug markets, one should note that the situation has been changing dynamically for the last six or seven years. Criminal leaders holding the control over the respective markets change from time to time, territories and hierarchical levels change, too.

There are two main ways to supply heroin. The first one implies use of the contacts of criminal leaders—or black market entrepreneurs⁴³—with heroin wholesalers in Turkey. The cases of carriers (mules) caught make it clear that purchases vary from two to 15 kg and these shipments are intended for smaller regional markets. The organizers of this scheme are typically criminal leaders dominating a specific regional market (more precisely, people from their close entourage in charge of drug dealing). There are also cases when independent criminal persons manage to import heroin and turn into a local market factor.

The second way is connected to the typical schemes of export to Central and Western Europe. It deserves greater attention since, for all practical purposes, it covers all other varieties. The scheme starts with the figure of the importer who buys heroin with 60 % to 80 % content of diamorphine (the active ingredient

⁴⁰ See more details in Chapter One on the evolution of Bulgarian organized crime. The team which has prepared the analysis of the drug market assumes that the typology of the predatory type and the market type of organized crime explains well the Bulgarian situation. See: *Wages of Crime: Black Market, Illegal Finance and Underworld Economy*, New York, Cornell University Press, 2002; the interpretation of this theory by Levi, M. – In: *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology* (third edition), Oxford University Press, 2005.

⁴¹ See: *The Drug Market in Bulgaria*, Center for the Study of Democracy, Sofia, 2003.

⁴² Preble, E., J. Casey, Jr., "Taking Care of Business – The Heroin User's Life on the Street," *International Journal of the Addictions*, March, 1969.

⁴³ See Chapter 1 and the provisional definition of the specific group of black market entrepreneurs.

of heroin) from Turkish laboratories at the approximate price of \$5,000 to \$6,000 per kilo⁴⁴ and supplies it to a specific European country. According to security service sources, the importers are persons whom Turkish producers fully trust in their long-term relationship. The networks trafficking in heroin to Western Europe, which have been detected over the recent years, reveal that these are people of Albanian, Kurdish, Serbian or Turkish origin.

The quantities and level of negotiation depend on the domestic market destination (Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, Bourgas or a smaller city). Quantities most often vary from 20 kg to 50 kg, which seems quite a lot in comparison to the small size of the Bulgarian market but typically the purity is below the average European level and heroin sells at lower prices respectively. On larger markets like Sofia or Varna the trusted buyer with whom the importer negotiates is somebody among the so called "kilo connections" (from the close entourage of the area boss in charge of the drug market). The importer and the trusted customer/kilo connection usually never see the drug when they negotiate the sale and purchase. Some fragmentary data referring to this level of negotiation point to the involvement of intermediaries, as well. This increases the price of the stuff but enhances the sense of security of the participants. The heroin itself is carried by people who have no idea of either the importers or their trusted customers.⁴⁵ These mules collect the stuff from a parking lot (or another public area) in Turkey and deliver it to a similar place in Bulgaria. This model suggests various schemes for the payment by the Bulgarian trusted person. It is possible to either pay \$10,000 to \$12,000 per kg or apply barter arrangements. In the late 1990's, the heroin remaining in Bulgaria (some 10 % of the shipment) was used to pay for the trafficking to Central and Western Europe (the so-called „spillage") but those practices have not been observed since 2003 – 2005. A more advanced version, especially among smaller dealers over the recent years, is the arrangement to swap amphetamines or cocaine for heroin.

In the case involving a foreign importer the routes may be very different after the shipment is delivered. Differences depend on the specific features of the domestic regional markets and on the multiple disruptions on the highest levels of drug dealing. The heroin may well undergo three or **four levels of adulteration** and then it may be earmarked for a specific area (city) or shared among several cities. Generally speaking, the supply of heroin to the markets of most Bulgarian cities is always under the control of the capital city. However, the main principle is that the black entrepreneur or the kilo connection sells the drug to the lower level at approximately \$14,000 to \$16,000 per kg. The heroin is adulterated at each lower level. One kilogram is used to make two kilograms. Hence the diamorphine content is reduced to 30–35 percent. An example of the Bulgarian heroin dealing is the market in Sofia in 2001–2002, when one of the most notorious kilo connections nicknamed Klyuna (the Beak) who controlled almost the whole

⁴⁴ The quantities and prices of Turkish heroin vary from one period to another. According to UNODC data, over the period 2000 – 2005 its purity ranged from 30 % to 80 % and the price was between \$5,000 and \$10,000.

⁴⁵ The description uses the labels which Preble and Casey used to analyze the market in New York in the late 1960's because they generally coincide with the situation observed in Bulgaria. The jargon of the Bulgarian underground world is avoided because it is too volatile and ambiguous and it might generate problems in understanding the situation.

capital city for some time demonstrated that the product was original by using a pressing machine to re-pack the heroin in packages that were full imitations of the layout and weight of those from Turkish laboratories. But the Turkish packages had been opened before and the stuff had been adulterated twice.

The next level is the delivery to the "head" (the boss) of the regional market. Sofia is divided conditionally into nine areas. In smaller areas a single connection might control several cities because of the much lower levels of consumption. The one or two kilograms from the shipment are adulterated to a half. Hence the active substance in the heroin is brought down to 15–17 %. The next adulteration takes place at the level of weight dealers (called also "mothers", "depots" or "gram dealers"). The principle of doubling of the "cut" (the adding of various other substances) is applied again and the active substance content falls down to 7–9 %. The last but one level is that of street dealers who buy two to three grams and continue to adulterate the heroin (by 20 to 30 %). Typically, street dealers add an extra dose by dividing one gram into six rather than the five standard doses. Thus the diamorphine content falls down to 4–7 % in the street dose. The last level is that of jugglers (pushers) who have no opportunity to adulterate the drug any further because it is packed by street dealer.

Table 2. Structure of heroin distribution networks

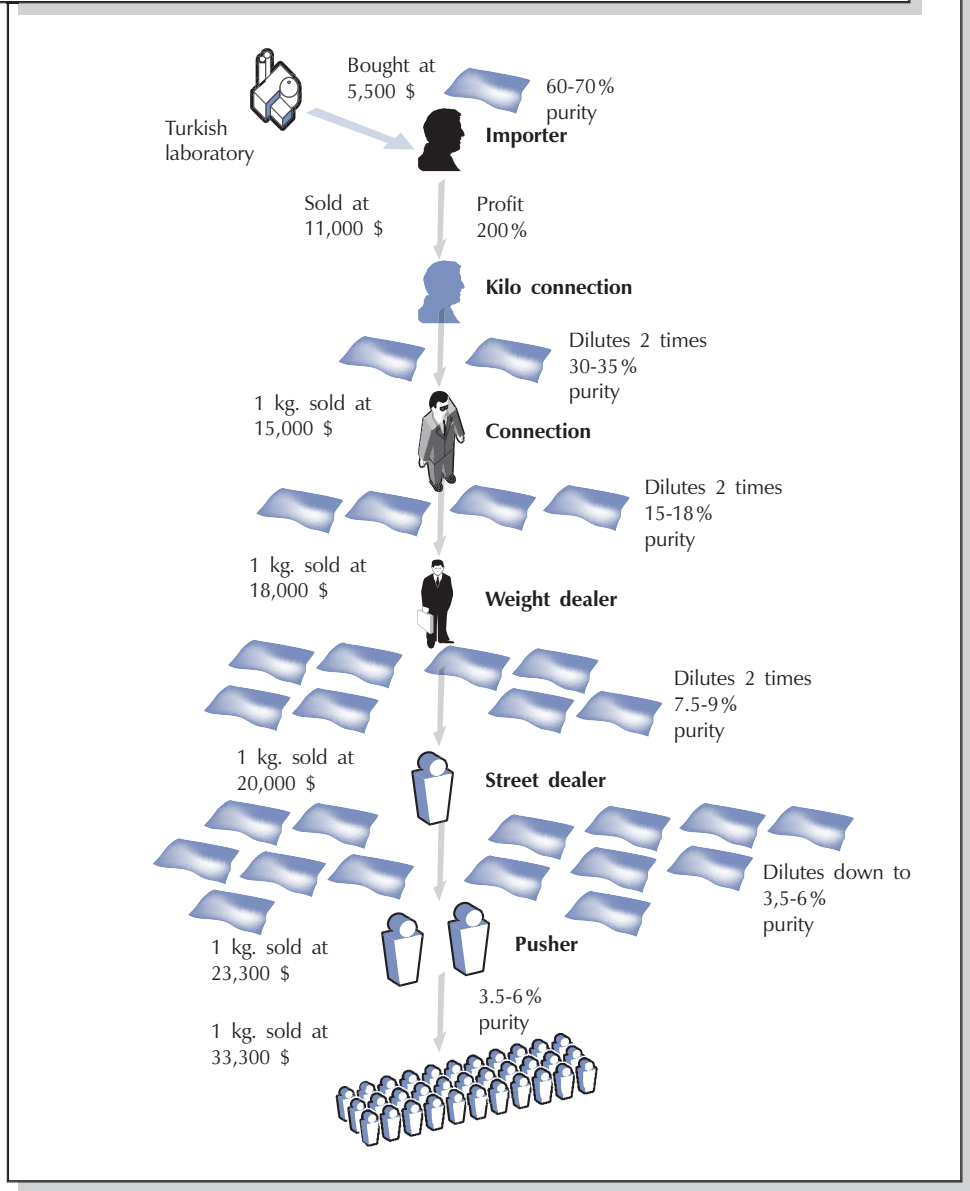
Preble, E., J. Casey (1969)					Bulgarian Classical Model (2003–2007)				
Distributor	Type of Cut	Adulteration	Percentage Heroin	Rate of Return on Investment	Distributor	Type of Cut	Adulteration (kg.)	Percentage Heroin (%)	Rate of Return on Investment (%)t
Importer		1 kg.	80 %	300 %	Importer		1	60–80	100
Kilo Connection	1&1	2 kg.	40 %	100 %	Kilo Connection	1&1	> 2	30–40	300
Connection	1&1	4 kg.	20 %	145 %	Connection	1&1	> 4	15–18	170
Weight Dealer	2&1	12 kg.	6.7 %	114 %	Weight Dealer	1&1	> 8	7.5–9	140
Street Dealer	1&1	24 kg.	3.3 %	124 %	Street Dealer		> 12.8	3.5–7	115
Juggler (Pusher)	?	?	?	56 %	Juggler (Pusher)	–	–	3.5–7	30–40

In the middle of the decade, the classical scheme from the foreign importer to the street dealer was gradually replaced by direct imports from Turkey and the hierarchy became ever more chaotic.

When describing the heroin distribution, one should keep in mind that each large regional market follows its own logic of development, adulteration patterns, price levels, and specific mix with other groups of drugs. For example, in the case of Stolipinovo neighbourhood in Plovdiv there is a shorter scheme of three

steps of adulteration after the importation⁴⁶ from 70 % of active substance at the consignee, 50 % at the weight dealers, and 30 % at the street dealer level. There exist other short schemes of personal imports when the connections (the area bosses in Sofia and dealer networks in the countryside) sell the stuff of their boss or their own stuff.

Figure 6. The way of heroin from top to bottom



⁴⁶ The information about the way the importation is organized is far too fragmented to give the overall picture.

As well as the top down cross-section, the review **from the bottom up** (Figure 6) is relevant to the assessment of the heroin market. The issue of paramount importance in this approach is the width of the pyramid base or **the first level**. The identification of the number of users makes it possible to delineate the framework of the vertical structure of the drug distribution. Unfortunately, like everywhere else in the world, the estimates for the heroin-addicted population in Bulgaria are highly speculative. Few are the systematic surveys providing reliable quantitative information. According to the National Drugs Centre, the number of problem heroin addicts in Bulgaria was 20,000 to 30,000⁴⁷ in 2004 – 2005. The survey of the Center for the Study of Democracy (2002 – 2003)⁴⁸ points to numbers ranging from 15,000 to 25,000.⁴⁹ Without entering into a discussion on the research methods used, one could assume that a contingent of 15,000 to 30,000 heroin users determines the parameters of the heroin distribution organization. This number of people dependent on or using heroin is higher than the number of actual users. For various reasons (ongoing medical treatment, migration from the country, disease, prison, etc.), part of the users do not participate in the domestic market.

The number of heroin users is a major factor for the size of the market. This is also the contingent of people among whom many street dealers and jugglers are recruited. The conversion of heroin users into sellers is a process which was analyzed long ago.⁵⁰ The surveys of injection users⁵¹ conducted in 2003 and 2005 established that 5 to 7 percent worked also as dealers for their own account.⁵² In-depth interviews with old heroin dependent users held at the same time revealed that over 50 % had previous or current experience in selling heroin or assisting street dealers. Practices show that when the police catch dealers it takes only a couple of hours to recruit the required number of dealers from among heroin users. The people at the lowest level of distribution are those who are most frequently caught by the police and also most frequently eliminated from the distribution network.

The second level consists of a group which was referred to as jugglers (pushers) in New York in the 1960's.⁵³ The word "dealer" is also used in Bulgarian, although

⁴⁷ See: Annual Report on the Problems of Drugs and Drug Addictions in Bulgaria, Sofia, 2006.

⁴⁸ <http://www.csd.bg/en/euro/antidrug.php>

⁴⁹ The first representative survey of the population in the country conducted at that time, which underpinned those estimates, made it possible to use indirect questioning in order to conclude that the number of heroin users reached even 32,000 to 34,000. Subsequent nationally representative surveys (2003 – 2006) did not confirm those observations. They partially confirmed the hypothesis that the large number of heroin users was due to mixing of that group with other groups using psychoactive substances. The collation of those observations to data from health establishments, damage reduction programs, police authorities and surveys among street dealers makes it clear that the estimate of 15,000 to 25,000 problem heroin users is realistic.

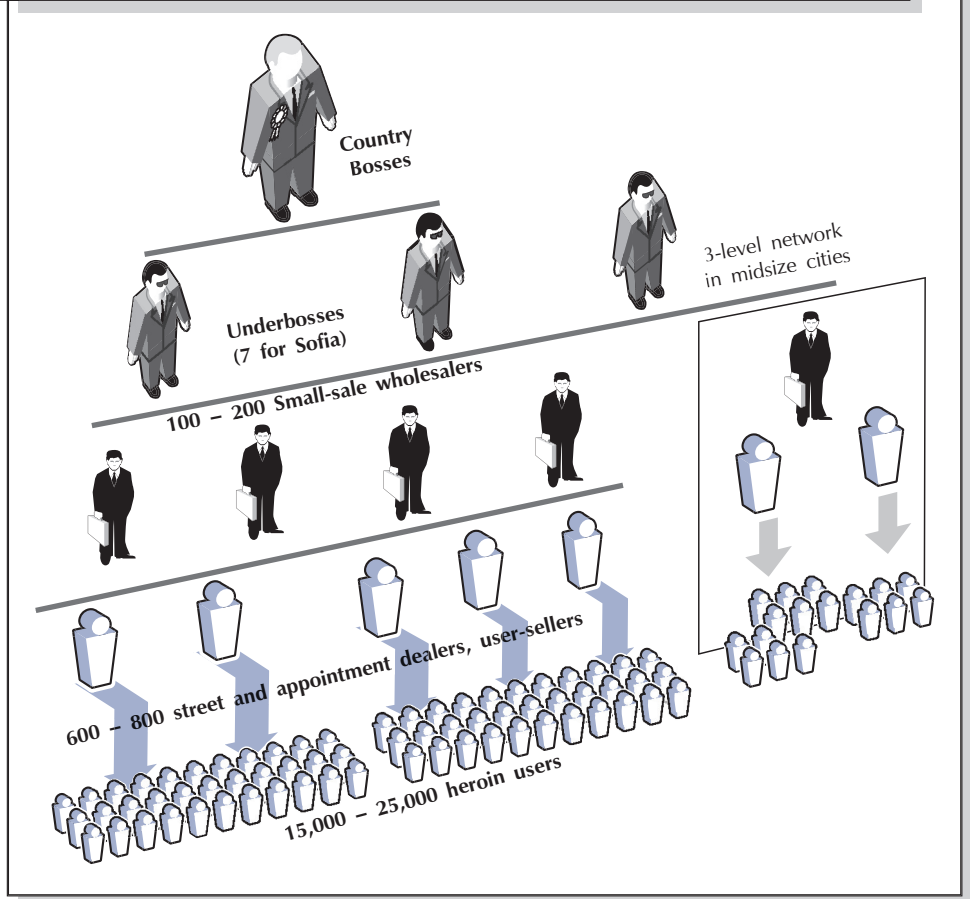
⁵⁰ See Preble, E., J. Casey, Jr., "Taking Care of Business – The Heroin User's Life on the Street," International Journal of the Addictions, March, 1969

⁵¹ In 2003, a survey was held in four cities (Sofia, Plovdiv, Bourgas and Pleven). The number of respondents was 501. In 2005, it was repeated with the same methodology in Sofia, Plovdiv, Bourgas and Veliko Turnovo, interviewing 498 respondents.

⁵² Bezlov, T., Barendrech, K., *Injection Drug Users in Bulgaria – Profiles and Risks. Initiative for Health Foundation*, Sofia, 2004; Bezlov, T., *Heroin Users in Bulgaria One Year after the Outlawing of the Dose for "Personal Use"*, Open Society Institute & Initiative for Health Foundation, Sofia, 2005.

⁵³ Preble, E., J. Casey, Jr., "Taking Care of Business – The Heroin User's Life on the Street", International Journal of the Addictions, March 1969; Silverman, L., Brown, G., *The Retail Price of Heroin: Estimation and Application*, 1973 Drug Abuse Council; Nordegren, T. *The A-Z Encyclopedia of Alcohol and Drug Abuse*, Universal Publishers, 2002.

Figure 7. Five-tier hierarchy in the capital city as compared to three-tier hierarchy of a small town



the higher level is called /street/ dealers, too. The specific features of heroin consumption make this lowest level of drug distribution extremely vulnerable. The easy recognition of heroin dependents (the police recognize almost 90 % of problem users in smaller cities), their easy traceability and the interrogations of drug addicts who have no scruples to name the juggler lead to frequent arrests by the police. To make the distribution network less vulnerable in the wake of the amendments of the Penal Code in April 2004 and the elimination of the so called personal dose,⁵⁴ a new layer of go-betweens has been introduced between street dealers and users. These are heroin addicts subject to arrests by the police. They usually deal in heroin to provide for their daily intake. These semi-pushers find customers among their friends who often have not used heroin previously.

The model implies continuous renewal of those who sell at the lowest level. The average street life of such dealers is between three months and one year. Then they are out naturally as they are caught by the police, go to prison, stop the use at their own choice or are eliminated by the bosses.⁵⁵ It is quite possible for

⁵⁴ For more details see *Drugs, Crime and Punishment*, Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, 2007; *Heroin Users One Year after the Elimination of the "Personal Dose,"* Initiative for Health Foundation, 2005.
⁵⁵ Most often because of indebtedness, economic inefficiency, aggravated heroin dependency, too close connections with the police, etc.

these jugglers to resume the dealing in several months and the cycle is repeated continuously. The model suggests that the most vulnerable layer is exposed to customers. These are the people who carry the drugs and the money and prevent the law enforcement authorities from reaching the higher levels. The participants at that level expect that it will be considered a venial crime and they will not be convicted or the conviction will be minimal. These people are sacrificed and this is imputed in the price of the final product.

Given that 5 to 7 percent of heroin users operate as pushers at their own expense and that users range from 15,000 to 25,000, the second-level dealers (street dealers) should range between 750 and 1,400 in number. This explains the number of people detained which the Ministry of the Interior announced to be 350 to 700 per annum over the period 2003 – 2006.⁵⁶

Street dealers perform different functions, depending on the heroin dealing model. In the case of sales by phone, they might take the courier role but their main function is to transfer the risk of exposure to the end customer. The effort to use such a protective layer further complicates the organization and reduces the profit margin. The comparison to 2002 – 2003 comes to show that the average daily income of street dealers was reduced from 150 levs in 2001 – 2003 to 120 levs three years later.

The third level of the distribution network consists of weight dealers who, unlike street dealers, are not sacrificed and belong to the organization. They have access to the higher levels, get protection from other criminal structures, rely on lawyer's defense when problems occur, enjoy the trust of the area boss, etc. More often than not they are drug dependent people⁵⁷ and have criminal records. These dealers have the right to buy the drug from the connection (the depot) by the gram and to prepare doses. This enables them to adulterate the stuff. In many respects, they operate as small entrepreneurs for their own account. At the same time, they must hire a certain number of street dealers to prevent the risk for the organization. In Bourgas, for instance, each of them has the right to hire only one street dealer. Two street dealers and, very rarely, three or four are allowed in Sofia. One could presume that the intention is to keep weight dealers small and to limit their economic capacity. It should be noted that until the late 1990's weight dealers sold the drugs directly to heroin users. Practices are still the same in smaller cities. The direct sales of heroin to users by weight dealers are indicative either of problems in the distribution pattern or special relationships with the customer. In the former case, street dealers are taken out of the scheme for one or another reason. Weight dealers often resort to direct sales after police raids in order to meet their financial obligations. It is at this point of time that the organization becomes most vulnerable. The latter case is observed with big users (high-volume consumption) and old (loyal) acquaintances.

⁵⁶ See Annual Report on the Problems of Drugs and Drug Addictions in Bulgaria, Sofia, 2006; Report by Chief Commissioner Valentin Petrov at the Public Hearings of the National Crime Prevention Commission (<http://www.csd.bg/bg/fileSrc.php?id=2251>).

⁵⁷ At some points of time, attempts were made in Sofia and some other cities to use dealers who were not dependent on drugs. If the network is stable and the market is good, a dealer is typically removed from the network if he "gets hooked" (starts using heroin). This strategy is often neglected due to the shortage of suitable people.

The fourth level (in Sofia) includes big dealers who have supplied and sold heroin without any clearly distinct function for the last couple of years. They increasingly turn into middle-level figures who are much better protected and hidden in the conspiracy. Previously they were the people to deliver the drug to the street dealers and to collect the money from them. Quite indicative of the obscurity of their role is the lack of a generic name. They are called in Bulgaria anything from "base" and "connection" to "gram dealer" and "dealer". Former participants in the scheme claim that those at the fourth level get much greater income than street dealers. Earlier on, they controlled street dealers, collected the money and called the bosses (in case of problems), while now they have additional functions including not only the preparation of the product but also lending to street dealers. The preparation of the product implies adulterating the heroin with the same amount of cut; the profit from the increased quantity is usually delivered to the head of the region. Bigger dealers are usually lenders to street dealers. Weaker street dealers tend to incur debts and "debt management" is included in the functions at that level. The supply to street dealers is the initial step to promotion in the drug hierarchy. The behavior and the personal traits determine whether the dealer at that level would be assigned some "managerial" functions, too, or whether he would simply deliver.

Bigger dealers can be assisted by various auxiliary figures, such as couriers (mules) and those who prepare the product (packers). The function of the mule is to deliver the stuff to the weight dealer. Cover-up is provided to minimize the risk through taxi drivers, drivers of vans delivering supplies to stores and even policemen (reported cases in Sofia, Blagoevgrad, Sliven, Bourgas, Kyustendil and others).⁵⁸ Some 100 to 200 grams of highly pure heroin are usually detected when such people are detained (this implies adulteration at a lower level). There exist the so-called "big warehouses" where large quantities sufficient to meet the demand in several areas or cities are stored. The capital city is reported to have two or three places of this type. About five kg of heroin were seized in the raid of a big warehouse in Sofia (August 2002).

Parallel to the structures involving jugglers, street dealers and weight dealers, there are independent operators working at their own expense. They are perceived as enemies of the system and special measures are taken against them. If a street dealer obtains drugs from a source outside the area, he is considered to be guilty of free riding (*shano*) and subject to severe punishment. The same term is used for those who operate outside the existing networks: free riders (*shanadjia*) is a person who often does not report to drug organizations and uses uncontrolled channels to obtain drugs. Free riding can be practiced also by the "official" dealers in the area: part of the stuff they sell comes from channels other than the official ones and it is not reported upwards. In the past, the group of free players was dominated by Arabs and people from neighboring Balkan countries (they imported drugs for their own consumption). As the old distribution system started disintegrating, even heads of areas and persons from the last-but-one levels of the hierarchy increasingly resorted to "unregulated" work. The scheme is to buy 100 or 200 grams of a product which is much purer than what is offered on the

⁵⁸ See Domestic News – Bulgarian News Agency, 25 September 2002; Sega Daily, 3 September 2003, 17 August 2007 (http://press.mvr.bg/News/news070817_05.htm), 2 September 2007 (<http://news.netinfo.bg/?tid=40&oid=1092570>).

street and easier to sell. Previously free riders were considered to be easy pray to punitive brigades because their property was redistributed. They were eliminated through ruinous fines and beating. In more serious cases they were maimed. For the last couple of years free riders have typically been eliminated by telling on them to the police.

The second, third and fourth levels make up the main drug dealing schemes (not only for heroin but also for the other groups of psychoactive substances). These three groups may operate in various configurations but the **linear type of the distribution network prevails**. In its typical shape, three or four street dealers buy from a single weight dealer and then they sell to their jugglers who are in contact with the end customers. A street dealer can deliver the stuff to the jugglers two or three times a day. This is the simplest and the most widely used scheme but it exposes the participants to risk all the time as it is not difficult to trace out drug users, identify the juggler, then the street dealer and even reach the weight dealer if the police do a good job. For instance, the bigger quantities supplied from the higher levels of the hierarchy to weight dealers are left at a secret place. After the allocation of the product by the third-level dealer, the stuff is again left at secret places from where it is taken to be sold in the street. Coded messages on the phone are used to agree on the delivery⁵⁹ and trusted persons deliver. Precautionary measures are a must even for the lowest levels. It is, for example, avoided (or prohibited) to hand over stuff or money. Usually both the money and the doses are placed at secret places. Cigarette boxes are the most common device. Jugglers usually carry only the ordered doses so that to be able to claim that they are his personal dose if caught by the police.

Table 3. Types of heroin dealers

	2003	2005
A dealer you contact on the phone	69.0	59.2
A dealer you meet in the street	44.0	43.2
A dealer you visit at his place	9.5	21.3
A dealer at a café, bar or restaurant	10.7	8.0
From friends	12.4	19.1

Source: *Injection Drug Users in Bulgaria – Profiles and Risks*. Initiative for Health Foundation, Sofia, 2004; Bezlov, T. *Heroin Users a Year after the Elimination of the "Personal Dose" – the Amendments to the Legislation and the New Risks*.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ They talk, for instance, of coffee, coke, a pharmaceutical, etc. Trials of weight dealers (depots, packers or gram dealers) point to such coded words as "the upper coffee" and "the lower coffee". "The upper coffee" means wholesale of heroin of up to 100 or 200 grams while "the lower coffee" is the heroin for the street dealers, which has already been divided into smaller quantities and it is about five grams.

⁶⁰ *Injection Drug Users in Bulgaria – Profiles and Risks*. Initiative for Health Foundation, Sofia, 2004; Bezlov, T., *Heroin Users in Bulgaria One Year after the Outlawing of the Dose for "Personal Use"*, Open Society Institute & Initiative for Health Foundation, Sofia, 2005.

When the sale is struck, first the buyer leaves the money at a specific place. The payment is confirmed and then the place from where the stuff can be taken is specified. The Roma version of the linear model involves the whole family: the father gives instructions on where to leave the money, the mother collects the money, and the children leave the heroin. Although secret laces are used, the poor discipline of persons dependent on drugs (customers, jugglers and even street dealers) often leads to breaking the rules of the contact-free sales.

When cell phones were introduced and became cheaper (by 2001 – 2002), the main model of **sales by phone** started to dominate. There are many varieties of the model. The most common is that of a **dealer with a telephone number known to the customers**. That selling technique emerged as early as the mid 1990's,⁶¹ when sales were no longer fixed to a specific place (post) but dealers make appointments with customers at various places throughout the city. They were constantly on the move and hence less vulnerable to the police. The introduction of pre-paid cell phone cards spread the technique all over the country. The time, place and quantity are agreed on the phone. The price is usually known because it is indicated on the label. For example, "a ten", means heroin at the price of ten levs, "a dozen" is heroin for twelve levs, "a five" or "a six" means heroine at the price of five or six levs respectively.

When jugglers are involved, versions become more complicated – the order is taken by the street dealer but the delivery is carried out by the juggler.

The most complicated version in the cases of sales by phone is that of "**telephone exchanges**". The "cell" (the autonomous structure consisting of a weight dealer, street dealers and jugglers) involves several people with different functions. There usually is a "work" telephone number for the placement of orders and, as it will be described further below, these relatively complicated structured are used for the distribution not only of heroin but also the other drugs – synthetics and marijuana. The customer's order is taken by the dealer on the phone who makes arrangements again on the phone (using pre-paid cards) to send the courier juggler to take the quantity from the supplying juggler. Typically the juggler fulfills only one order at a time so that to be able to claim a personal dose in the event of a police raid.

As well as sales on the street or by the phone, there are **sales from the home** of a juggler. Paradoxical as it may sound, in spite of the success of cell phones, sales from homes have tended to increase over the recent years. Jugglers using this technique seem vulnerable but some precautionary measures make the model quite reliable. The police have to overcome substantial problems to catch them because the street dealer with the cell phone can be caught at public places, whereas the entry into a private home requires a special permission. The underlying principle of this model is to ensure the protection of the home against penetration (locked door of the apartment block, armored doors, protective grids on the windows, etc.). In the case of a police raid the drug is dropped into the sewage system, while police officers enter the place. This model of dealer homes

⁶¹ According to old drug users and drug enforcement officers, the first dealer to introduce cell phones for dealing was Klyuna who, later on, became a well-known boss.

is described in various surveys conducted in big Western European cities. It is worth noting the tendency for dealers to use their homes as their base when the police pressure grows at public places. A special variety of this model is the sale in Roma neighborhoods, where a kind of a **"fortress"** has developed. In some cities this form of distribution influences the market very strongly. Export estimates for Varna point to about 80 % of the sales of heroin in the Roma neighborhood. In Plovdiv's⁶² Stolipinovo district (See *Figure 3*), the largest Roma neighborhood, covers almost the entire consumption of heroin in the city and since 2003 or 2004 it has turned into a major source of supplies to big cities in Southern Bulgaria. This phenomenon in the drug distribution could be the subject-matter of special research.

Figure 8. The Roma quarter at the fringes of Varna



The methods and levels of distribution have different characteristics in the networks operating in Roma neighborhoods. The competitive advantage of the sellers is associated with many specific features of the ethnic group living there. These

⁶² According to data from the Civil Registration Office on the permanent and current residence of people by 15 February 2007, Plovdiv is the second biggest city with a population of 377 thousand and Varna is the third biggest with 355 thousand inhabitants (See <http://grao.bg/tna/tab01.html>).

areas most frequently lack any consolidated urban planning rules and houses are built in a rather hectic manner. The density of building is very high; narrow paths divide one house from another or houses are connected so that jugglers can run through several houses when the police is after them. Dealer houses are located in the centre of the Roma neighborhood and there are guard posts on the way to them. But given the specificities of the Roma culture, it is even not necessary to have posts because when strangers enter the neighborhood the news spreads instantly. Drug users tell impressive stories of how the police raided the southern part of Stolipinovo, while jugglers continue to operate in the eastern, western and northern parts. When police officers move to the eastern part, sales stop there but they are resumed in the southern part, and so on. Another competitive advantage of the neighborhood is that users are offered premises for which they pay to take their dose in. A neighborhood with over 90 % of its population from the Roma minority (often hostile to the police) creates a kind of ethnic wall against law enforcement authorities.

Figure 9. Stolipinovo, the Roma neighborhood in Plovdiv – monopolist on local heroin market



When describing Roma neighborhoods, one should remember that each of them is unique and it is difficult to make general conclusions. Plovdiv has three more Roma communities outside Stolipinovo but no drug dealing networks have developed there due to their smaller size and the specific features of the population.

A major precondition for such infrastructure to develop in a Roma neighborhood is the existence of drug users among the inhabitants. There are some large Roma neighborhoods where the use of heroin is not tolerated and the local population persecutes drug users. In Sofia, for instance, aggressive and hostile attitude to Roma drug addicts has developed in the biggest Roma neighborhoods like Fakulteta and Hristo Botev since the late 1990's when an epidemic broke out there. Similar is the situation in Bourgas. At the same time, there is a late heroin wave of new addicts in Stolipinovo in Plovdiv and some smaller cities like Pazardjik, Kyustendil, Petrich, and some others.

The fifth (fourth) level is that of the actual operational management of the market in drugs. This is the level of the boss ("the head") of the territory. He controls dealers' networks, supplies or controls the supply of drugs (not only heroin but also all other groups of psychoactive substances), uses punitive brigades and "black" lawyers, and pays a certain rent to the highest level of the underground world. This layer is almost untouchable for the law enforcement authorities. It is extremely difficult to prove the activities of the boss; he will never touch the drugs and beware of any criminal actions that can be proven (possession of weapons, driving stolen vehicles, participation in acts of violence, etc.). The size of the controlled market determines the importance of the criminal leader. In small cities this can be the wholesale distributor who controls two or three street dealers and four or five jugglers and pays rent to enjoy the protection of a boss from the big cities (most often Sofia).⁶³ In the capital city the conditional fourth level involves the so-called "chiefs of areas" controlling the operation of several heroin networks and several networks for weed and synthetic drugs. The structure involves also couriers, packers and other auxiliary persons. The "office" in big metropolitan areas may well involve dozens of "employees". The rapidly changing environment for the last four or five years comes to show that one can no longer speak of a coherent hierarchical system (a pyramid). More often than not, there are several bosses in a single network, who "share the power" without any clear subordination lines, while networks cover various areas. This fourth (fifth) level is constantly on the move – people rotate up and down within months. Together with the area chiefs, there are also at least one or two smaller bosses with quite a vague position in the hierarchy.⁶⁴

One thing that is certain on the drugs market is the undoubted existence of subordination lines and division of roles. For this purpose, the **distribution of territories in the country** or, in some cases, in the city is indispensable. A major resource of the head of an area is his access to various levels in the police structures. Interviews with former and current street dealers make it clear that the typical weekly contribution to the police officers specialized in drug enforcement at a police precinct amounts to 15 to 20 levs per street dealer. The work

⁶³ However, this type of criminal leaders is more vulnerable. They have to communicate with street dealers and even get in contact with their stuff. and Varna is the third biggest with 355 thousand inhabitants (See <http://grao.bg/tna/tab01.html>).

⁶⁴ This duplication and re-duplication of levels sounds in the interviews of jugglers as follows: "I worked for Botse and Mitko Babata is under him". At the same time, it turns out that Botse who is a boss works for Mitko Ruski who, in his turn, has "agreed with Klyuna..." Stories are quite contradictory, e.g. Klyuna wanted to redistribute the territory and, at the same time, he worked for both Kosyo Samokovetsa and Meto Ilianski. "Kiro Yaponetsa is now working only in the /Roma/ neighborhoods" but there are areas "from which he is going to get", etc.

charge is paid by the dealer. Besides, interviewees claim that the area boss pays to the higher police levels at the precinct to ensure the smooth operation of the system. The amounts for which there exists specific and corroborated information ranged from 10,000 to 20,000 leva annually over the period 2001 – 2003. It is a known fact that dealers and bosses pay additional amounts on top of the general arrangements when "incidents" occur. For instance, the payment is per dose when a juggler is caught. When larger quantities are caught, e.g. 200 – 300 grams, the third level may reach 10,000 to 15,000 leva to "redeem". If a valuable dealer is caught, the payment goes for loss of evidence, procedural errors, etc.

These practices have been reported less frequently in the process of the stabilization of the law enforcement authorities observed over the last two or three years. Long-standing street dealers say that "rough techniques" to cover up drug dealers have become practically impossible. The prevailing scheme is to rely on leaks of information about a raid prepared in the area or to direct the file to a suitable police investigator (prepared to do favors or, at least, inexperienced). Area bosses pay not only in cash but also in other forms such as restaurant bills, repair and maintenance of vehicles and homes, VIP cards for brothels, sale of properties and automobiles at lucrative prices (the mark-up is covered by the area bosses). One of the most common forms which is mutually beneficial to both parties is the disclosure of information and the use of "sacrifices". In order to preserve the system the chief of the area needs to sacrifice street dealers. Of course, the easiest pray to help the career of "our" policemen are the free players but it is not always so easy to "offer" them, i.e. to arrange their arrest and to prove the offence.

The integrity of police is compromised at different levels. If a senior official cannot be reached, then a subordinate is sought to make the breakthrough at the higher level. When three or four officers work at a local precinct, it is quite possible for the head not to cooperate but the typical picture is to have at least a half of his subordinates abusing of their position. The paradox is that officers reported to have abused of their position are transferred to other precincts or re-appointed to another position at the same precinct. Even medium- and low-level dealers try to influence police officers. They use the specific police sub-culture in which rumors and personal intrigues play a special role in the career development (by offering incomplete information or information denigrating or distinguishing certain officers⁶⁵). As well as special relations with key local government and police officers, area chiefs maintain contacts with public prosecutors. The media have reported several cases of contacts with judges in the countryside. Similar to the contacts with law enforcement officers, magistrates did favors in the late 1990's and the beginning of his decade.

An important role in the functioning of networks is assigned to a certain circle of **lawyers** and the so-called "**punitive brigades**" managed by this fifth (fourth) level.

⁶⁵ The issue of the mutual influence between representatives of the underground world and police officers at various levels (from local patrols to directors of special services) has been a hot topic for the last 17 years and it is extremely interesting but it is not the subject-matter of this paper. It is worth noting, however, that it is often clear who serves whom (whether the informer serves the policeman or the policeman serves the informer and whether the recruitment of informers helps the law enforcement authorities or organized criminal structures).

Unlike the typical lawyer in penal proceedings who has diverse customers, the lawyer serving criminal structures (the so-called **"black lawyer"**⁶⁶) is specialized primarily in serving his contingent. He is called "black" mainly because of the means he uses. The typical black drug lawyer attacks the criminal justice system at all levels (police officers at local precincts where the arrest has taken place, police investigators, investigating magistrates, public prosecutors and judges), aiming at a "breakthrough" at every step of the pre-trial phase and the proceedings. The intention is not so much to have errors and omissions in the penal proceedings but to use clientelist privileges or corrupt practices. Black lawyers are usually former law enforcement officers or investigating magistrates (the most common case), more rarely former public prosecutors and most rarely former judges. The role of this group is to be a specific go-between, often offering deals – cooperation on part of the accused, cash payments, arrangements with the police to "sacrifice" somebody,⁶⁷ leakage of information to the media, etc. It is quite indicative of this role that the fees are typically calculated as a percentage of the money which should have been used to salvage the respective member of the structure. An important feature of the work of these lawyers is their networking. Cases are taken over, depending on the "influence" of the lawyer in the various districts or parts of the judiciary. For instance, there will be a lawyer working with people accused at Police Precinct No. 3 in Sofia because he used to be an investigator there; another one will focus on Police Precinct No. 1 in Varna because he is a former police officer there, and so on. If the customer is arrested in a district where the lawyer has no contacts, another lawyer will take over the case and swap it for other cases where the first lawyer holds good positions. The number of black lawyers varies from one city to another. In Sofia, for instance, there are some twenty lawyers involved in drug proceedings. It should be pointed out that the regional specialization is accompanied by a rather clear-cut hierarchy, i.e. juggler cases are assigned to junior members of the group. Unlike ordinary lawyers for whom a case lost means income lost, black lawyers are exposed to the risk of physical punishment in the case of failure.⁶⁸ Black lawyers continue to be obscure figures in many respects. They differ from the well-known prestigious lawyers⁶⁹ who defend notorious criminal leaders and who typically do not participate or tend to participate in black operations (collusion with magistrates) only

⁶⁶ Black lawyers are members of the legal profession linked to gray or black structures, including drug dealing structures, with good experience in penal proceedings which involve serious crime.

⁶⁷ In order to dispel the suspicion that "access" has been gained to a police precinct, arrangements are made with senior officers that one of the better known dealers with a criminal record is sacrificed. Sufficient quantities of drugs should be available at the time of the arrest to show to the media. Afterwards, it may turn out that this was not heroin but powdered sugar or that the search warrant has not been signed, etc.

⁶⁸ A crucial folklore element in the interviews of police officers and public prosecutors are the stories of bruised and beaten lawyers.

⁶⁹ The role of many well-known Bulgarian lawyers since the beginning of the transition has been quite controversial, undergoing various stages and intertwining with politics. For this reason alone it deserves special research. Here it is examined only in the context of the penal proceedings related to drugs and organized crime. Members of Parliament claim in their interviews that many well-known lawyers have been involved as consultants in the legislative drafting process because of their professional expertise. MPs say that some consultants suggested amendments to the penal law (supported by Members of Parliament some of whom were also well established lawyers continuing their practice during their term of office), evoking suspicion that the intention was to directly or indirectly evade justice. Thus even a mediocre lawyer could win a case, although the police officers, the investigators and the public prosecutors might have done a good job.

from time to time. The "top-level" cases are entrusted to popular lawyers, while black lawyers perform mainly auxiliary functions such as pressurizing witnesses, making arrangements for the loss of important evidence, etc.

Alongside with police structures and lawyers' networks, **punitive brigades** play a special role in the functioning of the hierarchy and the zoning principle. The violence committed by these structures is indispensable to the formation of closed territories, the control over the distribution of shipments, and the punishment for breaking the rules. The available information suggests that punitive brigades of the type which existed back in 1994 – 1997 become unsustainable. Instead, each head of an area has three or four persons at his disposal ("a carload") to maintain good discipline. One or two might be the personal bodyguards of the boss. The survey conducted in 2002 – 2003 reveals that the costs for the maintenance of a participant in a small brigade amounted to some 300 leva a week plus the extra costs like cell phones, drinks and food at the restaurants of the boss, prostitutes from the contingent of the boss, etc. The fines imposed on the jugglers and the property seized remain for the punitive brigade. The head of the brigade gets about 1,500 leva a week. He has a special status and might be a co-owner in the business. A member of the punitive brigade may receive less than a juggler since the market for violent services has shrunk and the level of pay should be geared to that in normal security companies where the employees get two or three times less than members of punitive brigades.⁷⁰ Generally, punitive brigades are used also in other spheres of organized crime such as collection of penalty interest, punishment of pimps and restaurant owners, etc. In fact, for the last three or four years, these structures of the drugs market provide violent services to almost all other black markets in all big cities of the country.

Since 2004 – 2005 the maintenance of independent punitive brigades has become increasingly difficult. Semi-professional structures have occurred with the participation of street dealers involved in the network: young, healthy guys usually selling weed and amphetamines who get together, if necessary, with free lancers and indebted heroin dealers. They get extra pay and special bonuses for each punitive action but their main source of income is dealing. This flexible approach relieves the "head" from additional costs and also makes it possible to use the services of different people who are less vulnerable to the police. **Punishments** can be conditionally divided into three levels: (i) a fine – depending on the severity of the breach, the person pays a certain amount ranging from several hundred and several thousand leva; (ii) beating – there are degrees of injury but generally the breaking of bones or severe injuries are avoided; and (iii) maiming – cutting of ears, stabbing of the bottom parts of the body, breaking of bones which are difficult or impossible to heal, such as elbows, knees, etc.

Both in the late 1990's (the emergence of zoning) and now (the beginning of its disintegration) punitive actions were used and continue to be used to threaten jugglers deviating from the rules. Two or three persons take part in the action. "More serious measures" require the involvement of people from three or four areas.

⁷⁰ See: Bezlov, T., *The Drug Market in Bulgaria*, Center for the Study of Democracy, Sofia, 2003.

The fifth level consists of the so-called **big bosses**. The names and nicknames at this level are a favorite topic of the mass media, police officers and politicians. All interviews with police officers, dealers and criminal leaders (conducted since 2002) have shown that the heads, i.e. the fourth (fifth) level report "up". It is mainly personal stories that we have to illustrate the functioning of the system at the higher levels. The only exception so far is the investigation of the Bourgas boss Mityo Ochite, which took about a year and ended up with his arrest in April 2007. One can draw the conclusion that the bosses at the top level are persons whose biography is linked to former extortionist groups (including former police officers). They have already developed a sustainable legal business which can prove substantial incomes. At the same time, their legal operations cannot exist without gray or black economic practices providing considerable financial, organizational and human resources. **Big bosses are never involved in black market operations** – they do not know and are not interested to know who is who in the dealers' networks, where the stuff goes, who carries it, who will be rewarded or punished at the lower levels. Their main criterion for assessment is the availability of "normal" revenues. Loyalty and the lack of problems in the organization are the other criteria. It is not clear to what extent big bosses are involved in the negotiations on the allocation of territories, to what extent they "license" dealers, to what extent they control the supply of drugs, the quality and prices. The interference of a big boss in the day-to-day affairs, even when serious problems occur in his territory, is quite an exception. As a result, especially over the recent years, the heads and big dealers start relying on the passive attitudes of big bosses and working on their own. However, a traceable principle is to have a proxy on each big market. The police reports and dealers' stories related to the last five or six years mention various names of proxies such as Anton Miltenov Klyuna, Pesho Shtangata, Shileto, Ivo Gela, Rasho, etc. They control the areas in cities like Sofia, Plovdiv and Varna.⁷¹ Two proxies in a big city (Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna and Bourgas) mean conflicts and frequently leads to wars. The division of people into those of VIS and those of SIC on the drugs market is reported to have disappeared since the beginning of 2002 but certain perimeters are retained. It is claimed, for instance, that in cities like Sofia and Varna amphetamine and marijuana belong to SIC, while cocaine belongs to VIS. The history of the drugs market for the last six or seven years is full of stories how some heads have managed to become strong enough in the control of violence and have sought the protection of a big boss against their old leader.

These descriptions of the big bosses raise the issue of the factors which determine their influence. The systematic review of confirmed fragments from known events related to them and their biographies leads to the assumption that alongside with their authority built through violence during the golden age of extortionist groups and their substantial financial resources, what matters are also their capabilities of influencing law enforcement and judiciary authorities at the national level and their access to politicians at the local and national level. The development of the country since the beginning of this decade, the public killings in 2001 – 2005 and some of the most notorious persons quitting the country lead to the ques-

⁷¹ The situation is somewhat different in Bourgas. Law enforcement officers and dealers claim in their interviews that the proxy is Yanko Pomoriiski who is reported by the police to be "complementing" to Mityo Ochite.

tion whether underground celebrities untouchable for justice continue to have the same importance for the functioning of the market in drugs.

The Zoning Principle

The zoning of the drugs market is an extremely interesting phenomenon typical of Bulgaria. The in-depth interviews with police officers and dealers lead to the hypothesis that the late 1990's saw the emergence of territories the control over which was subject to negotiations. Members of former local extortionist structures were ceded the control over the drugs market in their area. Sofia is the most telling example to this effect. Until 2001, it was divided into "points" or "posts" in the heroin distribution. The typical organization consists of a boss with four or five street dealers and one or two suppliers. There was a clear connection with either of the former groupings VIS and SIC.⁷² The zoning of Sofia is an illustration of how organized criminal structures effectively agree on zones of influence. Historical reconstructs show that, in the wake of a series of incidents (the killing of Polly Pantev and Lyonyata Djudjeto⁷³ in 2001), tension mounted and made representatives of the two groupings at medium- and high level to meet and negotiate the consensus solution to divide the territory of Sofia. The paradox was that **the boundaries of the drug territories followed the boundaries of operation of local/district police precincts.**⁷⁴ Thus Sofia was divided into nine areas, corresponding to the nine police precincts in the city. The principle of having a boss or a head of each area was adopted.⁷⁵ The head is assigned with the management of the whole organization of delivery and distribution, punishments, prices, etc. He "owns" the street dealers and controls their territory of operation. The dealing in another area, be it on the other sidewalk of the street, the sale of drugs from external sources or the work for another area boss are subject to punishment.

Drug dealers and members of the underground world who have impressions of the way in which drugs are distributed say that it is only natural to have this coincidence between the drug dealing areas and the territories of operation of police precincts because of past experience and the key role of the police in the redistribution of territories.⁷⁶ It is impossible to protect the territory without contacts with the respective police precinct. The experience of posts (street dealers selling in more than one area) showed that if police officers from more than one police precinct are to be involved and paid, the coordination became very complicated, costs increased and the risk of rivalry among corrupt police officers (in the presence of non-corrupt officers) was very high.

⁷² See: Bezlov, T., *The Drug Market in Bulgaria*, Center for the Study of Democracy, Sofia, 2003.

⁷³ Polly Pantev was shot dead on the island of Aruba on 9 March 2001. He was believed to be the most influential person on the drugs market who controlled the supply of heroin and cocaine. Leonid Fotev (Lyonyata Djudjeto) and his girlfriend were slaughtered in his apartment in Sofia on 16 September 2001. He was believed to have controlled the distribution of drugs in Sofia at that time.

⁷⁴ See: Bezlov, T., *The Drug Market in Bulgaria*, Center for the Study of Democracy, Sofia, 2003.

⁷⁵ "Head" was the title used when areas were demarcated and probably reflected the subordination to the biggest criminal leaders at that time.

⁷⁶ The corruption in law enforcement and judiciary authorities is of crucial importance for the development of crime in Bulgaria. Coalition 2000 has dedicated special research to this topic (See <http://www.anticorruption.bg>). The theme has been repeatedly discussed also by the policy makers at the Ministry of the Interior.

It is noteworthy that the old model of posts has not disappeared since the time when the territories were divided. It continues to operate but posts function within the area. They receive the drugs and report to the boss of the territory. There are also some general posts, i.e. places known to heroin addicts, which account for most of the sales. They are located downtown – the monument to Patriarch Evtimii ("Popa"), Orlov Most ("Sinyoto"), the monument to the Soviet Army ("Baba Yaga"), etc. The situation is similar in Bourgas and Varna. The main problem with this distribution of public posts is that the places of dealing become known to the general public and the police cannot afford to ignore or neglect them. In the beginning of the decade cell phones became so common that the Western model of telephone sales was introduced in Bulgaria, too. As a result, the old forms of control became more difficult to exercise. New dealers appeared and "took customers away from reporting dealers". The balance between the bosses controlling the posts was tilted and that reduced the proceeds of the two extortionist structures (VIS and SIC).

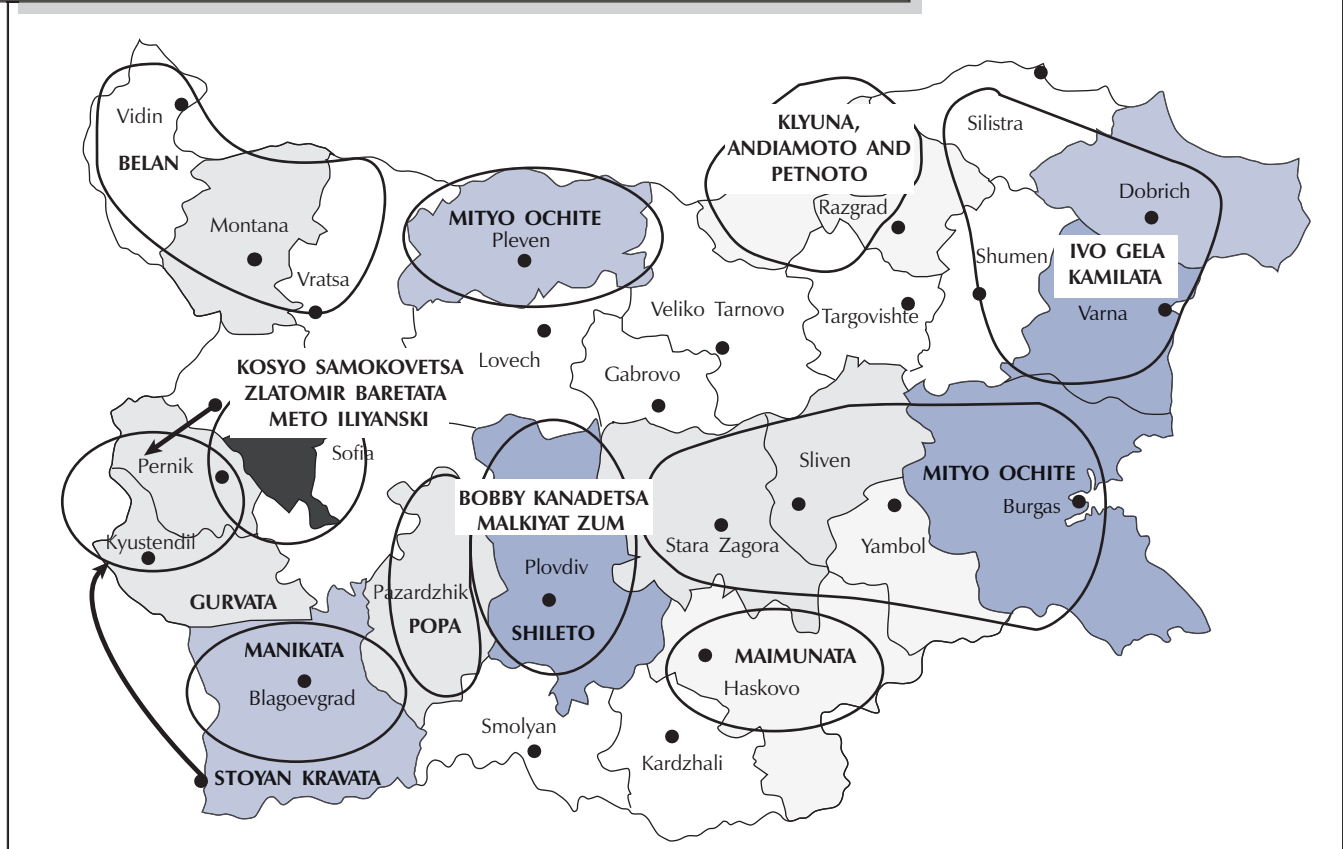
Unlike the division of Sofia, the countryside was divided in a more spontaneous and natural way. Local leaders (from the former subsidiaries of the extortionist groupings) were entitled to get control over the distribution of heroin. In 2002 – 2003 the analysis made by the Center for the Study of Democracy using at least two different sources⁷⁷ developed a conditional map of the allocation of the country, specifying the major criminal leaders exercising control in the big cities.

The logic of the control over drug distribution territories followed two principles. The first one related to the size of the regional market – larger markets subordinated the smaller neighboring markets. The second one was the strength of the local organization of organized crime. An organization is more important when it uses violence more effectively and has penetrated the local government institutions, the local law enforcement and judiciary authorities more effectively. Unlike Sofia, smaller cities usually do not need zoning. An exception to this rule is Varna, where the drug market is big enough. In smaller cities the drug distribution networks are part and parcel of the distribution network of the neighboring big city. There are some areas like South-west Bulgaria where not only the regional centre (Blagoevgrad) but also the smaller cities close to the border with Greece are intricately interwoven into the hierarchical structures of at least four criminal leaders in Sofia.

All interviews held in 2002 – 2007 point to a single main theme in the explanation of regional markets, i.e. their subordination to Sofia. Except for Bourgas and partially Plovdiv, the influence of the capital city is very tangible. People often talk of "permission from Sofia to take the heroin" or "permission to deal also in weed and amphetamines", "monthly contributions to Sofia", etc. The most realistic explanations are that the capital city continues to provide for the importation of the

⁷⁷ Information from special services, local police structures, interviews with street dealers and pushers, publications in the mass media, etc. After CSD published *The Drug Market in Bulgaria*, many and diverse comments and information on the maps were received. All this gives us grounds to believe that, in spite of some inaccuracies, the 2003 national map have a true reflection of the distribution of drugs. This map contains the names of some leaders who were omitted for one or another reason in 2003.

Figure 10. Areas of control over Bulgarian heroin market, 2003



The more intensive the color, the higher the consumption of drugs in the respective area in 2002–2004. For instance, it was the highest in Sofia, while in cities like Gabrovo, Lovech, Targovishte, Smolyan and others the use of drugs was minimal.

main bulk of the wholesale heroin and cocaine and to organize the production of synthetic drugs. The belonging to the networks centered on the big structures in Sofia safeguards the regularity of supply and also gives access to additional human and financial resources. There are typical cases of seconded dealers from Sofia and rescheduled payments for the drugs. On the other hand, isolation and disobedience lead to problems for the local criminal boss. He runs the risk to be exposed to the central law enforcement and judiciary authorities. While some events are controllable at the local level, area bosses stand no chance if the operation comes from Sofia. He might be taken at surprise, be refused contacts with senior police officials and magistrates or even be confronted with information and evidence of his operations.

2.2.2. The Soft Drugs Market

All component drug markets bear strong similarity to the core heroin distribution chain and the patterns in which it functions. In the late 1990s, **soft drug consumption topped all other drugs** and became the portion of the market most attractive to organized crime. At this point, local crime leaders started to invest consistent efforts to control it, competing for school neighborhoods and

other public spots. Until 2001–2002, however, weed was regarded as low-profit for two main reasons—its low street price and the frequent ups and downs in consumption.⁷⁸ As heroin demand shrank, though, the situation changed rapidly. All available surveys confirm the steady growth of soft drugs use in the period 2001–2006.⁷⁹ The First National Population Survey on Drug Consumption in Bulgaria conducted by Vitosha Research in early 2003 found that those who had tried marijuana at least once (lifetime prevalence) were around 130,000. In 2007 already, the survey recorded 160,000 people who had tried the drug. Another survey conducted by the National Focal Point on Drugs and Drug Addictions in 2005 captured a much higher lifetime prevalence of 4.4%,⁸⁰ or 200–210,000 people. The latter survey, however, did not cover under-18 marijuana users, which, according to data from the National Center for Drug Addictions, would add another 60–80,000 users to the total.⁸¹

In contrast to heroin, most locally consumed soft drugs are also locally produced. This deprives crime enterprises of one of their main competitive advantages—contacts with transnational supply networks and the cross-border routes they control. Moreover, climate across the country is favorable to growing cannabis practically anywhere and a large portion of users grows their own plants. This is the main difference between soft drugs and amphetamines, which are much more complex to produce and depend on the import of precursors that the average user could hardly undertake. Early in the decade the market of cannabis products was already well established and sufficiently developed. Selling to friends and through small-scale pushers were the most common methods of distribution. They could meet growing demand due to the effectiveness of networks stretching out to many remote and small places, which bought out the crop, sold it at large or pushed it in the street.

The 2002–2003 survey⁸² demonstrated that at the time, the markets of heroin, synthetic drugs and cocaine controlled by organized crime were independent

⁷⁸ Heroin addiction where the need for a daily fix and withdrawal symptoms in its absence could drive users to do anything, to the point of getting involved in crime and prostitution to buy the drug. The sales of marijuana and other cannabis products, though, depend on a number of factors, such as weekend recreational use, seasonal peaks, holidays, the frequency of friendly gatherings or celebrations, etc.

⁷⁹ Estimates are based on the annual population surveys of drug consumption in Bulgaria made by Vitosha Research in 2002–2007. See also: *Annual Report on Drugs and Drug Addictions Issues in Bulgaria*, 2006, National Focal Point on Drugs and Drug Addictions.

⁸⁰ Standard questionnaires measuring prevalence with questions, such as: "Have you ever tried (any type of drug)?" are virtually asking respondents to self-report the commission of an offence. It is not clear, however, what portion of Bulgarians would willingly self-report their personal use of drugs. Vitosha Research have consistently used the same set of question from 2002 up until 2007 to put together the profile of users who „had tried at least once in their lifetime“ a certain drug, and the findings suggest that with the introduction of harsh punitive measures for drug offences the number of respondents who would self-report drug use has plummeted. School surveys show that marijuana using students are increasing each year. In addition, most of old users are still living in Bulgaria. This gives us ground to suppose that part of the respondents would not self-report in fear of legal consequences. This is also the reasons that different sociological surveys produce disparate results.

⁸¹ National Population Survey on the Use of Alcohol and other Drugs in Bulgarian Schools (9-12 Grade) conducted by the National Center for Drug Addictions and the National Center for Public Health Protection as part of the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs (ESPAD) in May 2003 and surveying 1,400 students from 75 sections in various general and special secondary schools.

⁸² See: Bezlov, T., *The Drug Market in Bulgaria*, Center for the Study of Democracy, Sofia, 2003.

from each other and none of them had any links with the market of cannabis products. Up to 2003, the dominant cannabis distribution patterns in most large towns⁸³ were either through friends, or by independent dealers. Surveys from that point on⁸⁴ bespeak the gradual **monopolization of the market**. Distribution networks that dealt in synthetic drugs and marijuana started to merge. Even the vernacular names assigned to marijuana suppliers in most neighborhoods or towns, such as "the firm" or "the monopoly" confirm that organized crime had taken control of the market.

Several factors led to the capture of the marijuana market by criminal organizations. The first factor was that criminal enterprises established control of wholesale deliveries. Police measures targeting cannabis production and access to the crop had a major role in this respect. In the late 1990s, when the market was split between criminal organizations and numerous small free players (either marijuana-using sellers or black market entrepreneurs), the latter bought small amounts directly from growers (usually around one kilo of dry cannabis) and sold it to friends and acquaintances. As police clamped down on producers in the notorious cannabis cultivation area around the town of Petrich, the access of casual buyers to the region was significantly restricted. Interviews with users long engaged in small-scale marijuana dealing have revealed that around 2004–2005 it had become nearly impossible for an outsider visiting a pot-growing village in the Bulgarian south-west to buy it freely and leave undisturbed. In most cases the police would seize the stuff and caution them against repeat visits. Interviewees were convinced that the police's stint was rather to watch out for competition of the area's true masters than enforce the law. The police, on the other hand, claim that local departments are not appropriately staffed and equipped to counteract the sophisticated techniques used by criminal organizations. They take particular safety measures during the riskiest part of the supply chain—transportation, sending two or three reconnaissance cars ahead and using mules as drivers of the vehicle where the cannabis is loaded, so as not to harm the organization in case the police seize the batch.⁸⁵ The local members of crime syndicates are familiar with every single police officer in the area and must keep track of where they are patrolling on the day when the deal takes place. Even if officers from other departments were to be posted in the area, they would stick out in the sparsely populated local villages and towns. As a result, local growers have stopped taking risks and only sell to a selection of trusted clients. On the whole, even if the suspicion of police complicity is waived, law-enforcement bodies prove unable

⁸³ Varna and Bourgas are an exception to this pattern.

⁸⁴ Since 2002 the Center for the Study of Democracy and Vitosha Research have performed six annual victimization surveys containing a significant bloc of questions on the use of the most widespread psychoactive substances. In addition to that in 2006 and in the first half of 2007 the Center conducted a series of in-depth interviews with drug dealers and justice and law-enforcement officials.

⁸⁵ Interviewed officers also criticized internal police regulations on counteracting cannabis growing, describing them as "intentionally impractical". One of the rules reads that guards must be placed around any discovered cannabis field until the plant matures, then a specimen is to be sent for analysis and if it confirms that the plant is indeed cannabis, only then the field can be lawfully ploughed out to destroy the harvest. Thus, any police force unlucky enough to have found green cannabis must assign guards functions to its officers. In 2006, for instance, the border police had to place guards round fields throughout the summer, despite the severe staff shortages. Later on, they took care not to find not to find cannabis fields again.

to compete with the professionalism of criminal structures. In contrast to small-scale entrepreneurs, whose career would end if deprived of one kilo of cannabis and registered by the police, organized criminal players can easily recover from damage and loss due to police operations.

Second, and perhaps even more significant, was the creation of an organized cannabis distribution network within particular regions or cities. Some of the bigger cities, such as Varna and Bourgas, were seized rather quickly back in the early 1990s. Others took longer time and greater effort to control, e.g. Plovdiv and Sofia. These differences were due to several factors, but mainly that in the two coastal cities criminal enterprises' hit squads managed to oust the small suppliers and that there were no marijuana growing spots in close proximity. In contrast, the only district within the city of Plovdiv firmly held by organized crime is the Roma neighborhood Stolipinovo, while also and a number of villages and towns in the countryside around town grow marijuana readily available to users through networks of associates.

The socio-demographic **profile of marijuana users** is different from that of heroin users from the margins of society. These are secondary school youths, university students, and career oriented professionals under 35⁸⁶—an age group associated with relatively high income. Soft drug distribution was therefore organized around different assumptions. It is hard to decide whether the local drug lords based their distribution schemes on rational analysis, considering the ineffectiveness in employing heroin dealers for soft drug distribution both because of the social differences between target clients and popular apprehension that soft drugs are a transition step to heroin use. However, they engaged in the networks mainly amphetamine dealers who would not sell heroin. Interviewees confirmed that marijuana dealers were recruited in two basic patterns. Some dealers came from among neighborhood offenders and hooligans, some of them partly experienced in school sales—muscular and aggressive pushers who worked for a fixed salary, percentage of the sales and bonus payments. They also acted as hit squads in some districts in Sofia and Varna. In the cases when former independent pot dealers had to be forced to join the network or give up the competition. The second recruitment line relied on incorporating exactly those petty sellers to work under a certain crime boss. They were coerced either through threats of reporting them to the police or through violent physical assaults. Economic benefits such as the guaranteed regularity of supplies and payments were also used to convince the independent players to join. Part of old marijuana dealers were compelled to start selling amphetamines as well. Besides school pushers, the soft drug networks recruited dealers that had been involved in amphetamine distribution in the areas of Sofia and Varna. Thus, early in the decade the typical marijuana street dealer was never wholly involved in the drug selling business, albeit it could be his chief source of income, but always had some other occupation (e.g. student or professional). With the advent of organized crime on the cannabis market, however, street-level dealership was professionalized.

⁸⁶ According to the Vitosha Research victimization survey of 2006, around 75% of those who have tried marijuana are between the age of 15 and 35. Also, the Annual Report on Drugs and Drug Addiction Issues in Bulgaria, 2006 of the National Focal Point on Drugs and Drug Addictions announced that 8.7% of people from the 15–35 age group "have tried" marijuana "at least once in their lifetime".

Criminal enterprises gained serious advantage through their most effective diffusion scheme involving **mobile phone coordination** of orders and sales. In Sofia, Varna and Bourgas, this has been the dominant pattern in the last couple of years on the four main markets—of heroin, amphetamines, marijuana, and cocaine. Each drug is delivered by a separate supplier. The busiest phone dealing networks bar any face-to-face contacts between dealers and supplier both for safety from law enforcement and to prevent theft of drugs from the dealers. Delivery to clients is made in various ways. For instance, the supplier can bring a large sack of grass in the local park with users swarming around and the police patrolling about, but not guarding the exact site, or a taxi driver can pick a customer from a designated address, deliver the staff and drop him half a mile down the street.⁸⁷ Taxi drivers, though, are easy to identify through license plate and the company they work for, so, to escape detention, a fake client to carry the drug in case of vehicle often accompanies them search.

A number of methods are used in the capital city to hold supplier and dealers in check. Supervisors may impose fines on supplier for delaying the delivery, especially for serious delays that often make clients withdraw the order. Marijuana quality is also monitored, as supplier sometimes contaminate it with plain grass and weeds to increase volume and make an extra profit from that. This is why, much like in the legal sales practice, supply bosses arrange "mystery client" monitoring, client surveys (regular customers are contacted via phone to be asked about quality of the weed delivered), and even hotlines for complaints. The pattern involving phone sales and supplier deliveries⁸⁸ has suited well the rapidly spreading soft drugs market. The older between-friends distribution model was much more convoluted, as any member of the circle deciding to try stuff from the same dealer had to wait for him to come, then order a certain amount in the presence of the connection, and then again wait for the delivery. The phone model is a shortcut, as one only has to dial a number and soon has a supplier at the door or elsewhere. Some less widespread methods are also used by organized crime, such as a street dealer walking on a fixed beat (e.g. in the "Emil Markov" residential area in Sofia) where potential buyers can find him at certain hours. This pattern is reminiscent of heroin some distribution approaches from a decade ago. Organized crime remains firmly established in schools as well, with sometimes paradoxical cases occurring—in a school in Sofia the "of-

⁸⁷ Taxi drivers and companies are worthy of a separate survey. These are legitimate entities providing ample jobs of great mobility and numerous contacts with customers which makes them attractive to a large number of individuals involved in (organized) crime. Deviant behavior in taxi drivers can also occur as a result of some companies' culture comparable to that of marginal social groups as well as the shaky profits that can be very low due to fierce competition in the sector and foster the seeking of supplementary income. Various crime structures use the services of taxi drivers in car theft and burglary, or in prostitution where they are engaged as guards and "cashiers". They can perform various roles in drug distribution as well. In the mid-1990s they used to drive heroin addicts to sites where they could buy a fix—in Sofia these were mainly spots (often in the open) in the Roma populated neighborhood Fakulteta. In the late 1990s in Plovdiv many taxi drivers acted as mobile suppliers to end-users. At about the same time, they started transporting heroin from the main storage facility to those set up in the housing projects or even directly to street-level dealers.

⁸⁸ The same model was copied by a distributor unrelated to the dominant crime syndicates. In Sofia, a former underboss from distribution Area 6 started his own network of appointment dealing. However, it is quite probable that his activities were authorized by the syndicates and he might not be a retailer proper, as the scheme involves managing large staff.

ficial" cannabis dealer they had employed was in fifth grade and selling to older students. The choice of someone so young for a pusher was probably made to reduce suspicions. His clients, of course, had no doubt that the youngster was tied to criminal structures.

The regulatory environment in Bulgaria also significantly affected the advance of crime enterprises on the soft drug market. In particular, in 2004 the Bulgarian Criminal Code was amended to abolish the provision specifying that addicts were exempt from criminal responsibility when caught with only a **single dose** (allegedly intended for personal use). The Bulgarian pro-legalization movement *Promjana* conducted a poll among the members its website forum concerning the relation between marijuana price and quality and the dealers that sell it. It showed the link between Criminal Code amendments and drug diffusion, identifying three distinct periods in which different patterns were dominant: up to April 2004, from mid-2004 to late 2006, and from early 2007 on. Due the new strongly restrictive provisions for possession introduced in 2004 independent retailers (so called sole traders) gradually dropped out of the market. In 2006, weed users in most Sofia districts and the larger cities reported that they were buying from a "monopoly" or "firm" (the street jargon name for controlled dealers). Within the first two months of 2007 independent retailers reemerged again. Organized crime networks at the same time have not stopped operating. Findings from the summer of 2007 even indicate a tightening of control by crime enterprises in Sofia, Varna and Bourgas.⁸⁹

Interviews with dealers to friends suggest that a more repressive legislation (as was the Criminal Code in the period 2004–2006) places independent retailers in a more vulnerable position and they cut distribution to a minimum not because of direct violence or threats from organized crime, but rather to avoid being caught by the police. They can't risk selling but to a very limited number of friends, as the bosses offer prizes to those who identify an independent retailer. Once such a dealer is identified, he is more likely to be investigated by the police than battered by a hit squad. Most probably, in the recent dismantling of two cannabis-growing greenhouses in downtown and suburban Sofia,⁹⁰ the police had received reports from organized crime. Thus **criminal enterprises rely partially on law and its enforcement to gain advantage in their own access to the crop and in the retail market**. Current prices are a good indicator whether a market is controlled by organized groups—with the same quality of the drug, syndicate crime imposes prices twice as high as in free retailing.

Cannabis quality has been on the decrease, and adulterated stuff is increasingly on offer. Many teenage users in Varna, for instance, believe that a joint is only smokeable when "you put something inside" to enhance the effect. This is a very disturbing trend, as the cutting agents used (benzodiazepines, amphetamines, even heroin) can harm users to a much greater extent than marijuana. Youngster

⁸⁹ Data associated with Bourgas is actually about the nearby resort Slanchev Bryag. It is highly possible that in this case Sofia-based organized groups have temporarily moved out their markets after the marijuana networks crisis in the capital city which occurred with the capture of its main bosses.

⁹⁰ Greenhouses were discovered in 2004 in a flat in the downtown residential district Lozenets and in August 2007 in a summer house in Pancharovo, a village at the outskirts of Sofia.

have visited emergency rooms with acute heart disorder symptoms after smoking weed cut with large amounts of amphetamines. Another potential harm is the increased chance of getting hooked. It must be noted, though, that cut grass may not be too widespread and Varna might be an exception, as very little evidence suggests that it is commonly used in Sofia and there is no such evidence for other cities.

The described dealing patterns suggest that **following 2004–2005, the soft drug trade in the large Bulgarian cities came to be dominated by organized crime.** Marijuana dealing networks attached to existing local drug distribution run by organized cartels. Their place in the hierarchy, though, is dependent on local patterns, of which three basic types can be distinguished.

The first one is highly centralized with **distinct branches by type of drugs**, all accountable to the top level. Organized drug dealing in Bourgas up to the spring of 2007 had precisely this structure. Marijuana distribution is thus one of four main substructures, managed by a "lieutenant"⁹¹ responsible for cannabis supplies and dues collection; another lower-level lieutenant supervises the dealers. Bourgas and small nearby towns (Nesebar, Slanchev Bryag, Pomorie, Sozopol and other smaller coastal villages where the available population in the tourist season doubles) have formed a market with a single clear-cut **organizational pyramid** with monopoly undisputed over the last decade. Thus, the profits from the separate drug submarkets flow into the same hands at the top.

In Varna and the several distinct zones in the capital Sofia, marijuana was integrated into a **zoning pattern** of distribution. It is a compound structure where each zone's boss sells strictly within the bounds of his zone through a well-developed area network of dealers, and buys it in large from a single or several supply channels.

Smaller towns (Blagoevgrad, Pleven, Dobrich, Haskovo, Sliven, Razgrad, Silistra, etc.) have a totally different model based on the **control over independent dealer groups**. These small groups have their own supply channels and rules of profit distribution. However, they are made to pay dues to the town supervisor authorized by one of the few drug lords of national influence.

2.2.3. The Synthetic Drug Market

If drugs could supply a metaphor of transition, one would be tempted to call **heroin** the anesthetic needed to alleviate its shocks, as opposed to **cannabis and synthetic drugs**, representing the drive to entertainment of a society slowly getting to normal. After the severe political crisis of 1997 followed by increasing economic stability, the latter portion of the drug market grew due to souring use. As various surveys confirm, there is an obvious parallel and cross-influences between the soft drug and amphetamine markets. Data from the national population surveys on drug use show that 80% of amphetamine users in the country are also using marijuana.⁹² The growing use of marijuana can be traced to changing

⁹¹ Data based on interviews with police officers and prosecutors, as well as drug dealers who have operated in Bourgas.

⁹² Analysis is based on findings of the annual Vitosha Research surveys throughout the period 2002–2007.

attitudes among the 14 to 30 year-olds who were looking for chill out on substances more potent than alcohol and tobacco, but less destructive than heroin. The younger and better-off generation was searching for a safe recreational drug to enhance and vary their experience through soft and synthetic drugs, instead of sliding down the escapist routes offered by heroin.

Synthetic drugs production

Domestic demand for synthetic drugs emerged in the late 1990s,⁹³ when the taste for techno music and the whole entertainment style around it, with designer drugs at the core, became popular. Similar to the marijuana market, at this stage two markets seemed to coexist. One was formed around the underground music scene with club DJs making extra income and friends selling to friends. The other segment developed in the commercial entertainment venues (discos, clubs, and bars) run by organized crime. The clients of both segments showed a marked preference for domestically produced amphetamines, ignoring varieties imported from Europe, which were excessively expensive. At that time locally manufactured drugs were chiefly exported to the Middle East and did not supply the European or the domestic market. Similar to heroin, the channels for synthetic drugs export were run by Bulgarian residents of foreign origin. Interviews with users from the underground culture scene confirmed that such traffickers were their early suppliers. The second group of users, who bought at night clubs owned by organized crime players, was supplied straight from the producer. Despite the lack of detailed reliable evidence, it seems that in the late 1990s the leaders of former racketeer insurance companies and even some oligarchs⁹⁴ had entered this rather hermetic business.

Existing production facilities and methods sustained for deliveries to the Middle East began to supply the domestic market. The early production and export cycle had been rather simple, involving one or two chemists who knew the production technology, a couple of mules to transfer the ready product to the Middle East, and one or two suppliers of equipment, precursors and chemical agents. Sometimes, manufacturing in Bulgaria and dispersion in the market countries were supervised by local authorized organizers. At first, the amphetamine production workshops did not take any special measures to conceal their activities. From the former state producers deliveries were made straight to the newly set illegal laboratories,⁹⁵ whereas the outbound produce cleared customs at the Bulgarian-Turkish border (on its way to the Middle East) by simply being declared for chemicals and medicaments. In-country deliveries were also easy to operate. Couriers took the illegally produced pills straight to the clubs or even to private homes.⁹⁶

⁹³ Earlier local use was rather limited to a small circle of young techno music promoters who organized rare parties in abandoned industrial sites and warehouses.

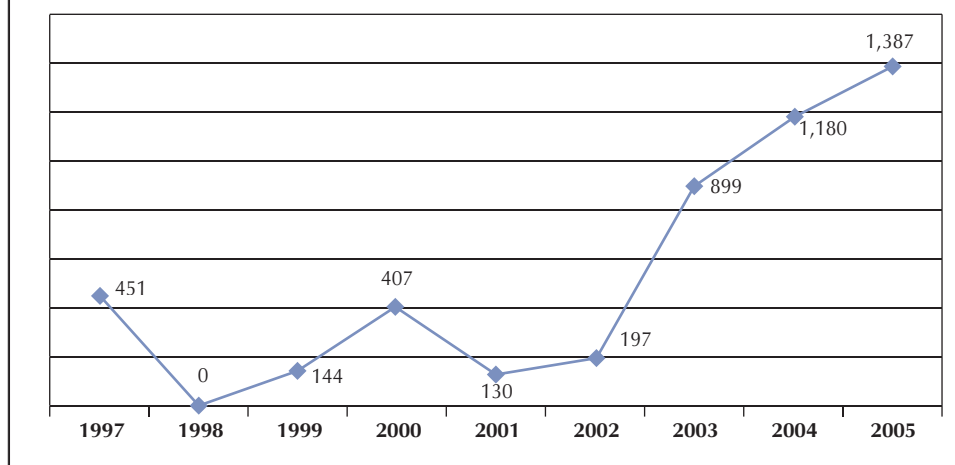
⁹⁴ The Opitsvet case described below shows that the group of black market entrepreneurs also saw opportunities for vast profits in synthetic drugs production.

⁹⁵ Captagon left over from the pre-1990 produce of state pharmaceutical companies has reportedly been exported later by black market entrepreneurs who exploited previous contacts with the Arab world to make continuing deliveries to Middle Eastern countries in the next couple of years. With the running out of drugs in stock, they turned to setting up clandestine labs, now draining the state producers from skilled chemists, precursors and technologies.

⁹⁶ Interview with an ex bodyguard of a crime leader from Sofia's underworld.

The first such amphetamine workshops were discovered by Bulgarian law enforcement bodies as they engaged in consistent cooperation with European anti-drug agencies to trace the import of precursors.⁹⁷ Laboratory operators and trafficking channel runners were then easy to track down. It is not clear to what extent the relations between Bulgarian special services and resident citizens of Middle Eastern origin⁹⁸ affected the organization of illegal local amphetamine production, but obviously, after the Opitsvet disclosures in late 1997⁹⁹ the production and export cycle was radically changed. Amphetamine producers turned to a **hydra-like mode of operation** guaranteeing that the enterprise would remain safe in any case when a workshop is busted or a large delivery is caught. Although the police often seize precursors and ready amphetamine pills, dismantle laboratories and capture couriers, their actions have seemingly little effect on the production process, as damages are anticipated and risks are accordingly provided for.

Figure 11. Synthetic drugs seizures in Bulgaria (kilograms), 1997–2005



The system also resembles the hourglass structure used by Peter Reuter¹⁰⁰ to represent cocaine distribution. According to this scheme, the widest upper part of the inverted triangle is occupied by the “workers,” hundreds of low-skilled

⁹⁷ Interview with former high official at the anti-drug department at the National Service for Combating Organized Crime (NSCOC).

⁹⁸ Various evidence suggests that even at the beginning of the present decade special services maintained dubious relations with this group of foreign nationals, most of whom had been informants of the communist State Security. On the one hand, the National Service for Combating Organized Crime (now General Directorate) raids amphetamine laboratories and investigates their masterminds. On the other hand, these foreigners are still used as informants by the National Security Service.

⁹⁹ The largest facility for Bulgarian production of amphetamines so far was a laboratory in the village of Opitsvet, where 330 kilograms of amphetamine base powder and 666 kilograms of Benzylmethylketon (BMK) were seized. Of the people involved in their manufacture one, the chemist Valeri Velichkov, was arrested on site, while Kristian Mladenov was later detained in Hungary through Interpol (see *Sega* daily, February 26, 1998, *Demokratsia* daily, May 4, 1998, and <http://www.kriminalist.info/50s2.html>).

¹⁰⁰ Reuter, P., *Do Middle Markets for Drugs Constitute an Attractive Target for Enforcement*, 2003.

hands¹⁰¹ who receive cheap equipment,¹⁰² precursors, and accurate instructions (to minimize errors via simple technology). Once the essential precursor Benzylmethylketon (BMK) is secured, it is very simple to produce amphetamines. Even the least qualified could follow the production technology, as the synthesis of amphetamines becomes as simple as alcohol distillation, practiced on a mass scale by Bulgarians. To minimize possible losses, the chemical equipment is kept at laboratories separate from workshops operating tablet making machines. After the year 2000, illegal workshops detected by the police were found to employ staff with basic schooling, rather than qualified chemical engineers. The level below is populated by several dozens of couriers handling the shipping of precursors, sub-products, the amphetamine powder and the ready tablets. The second to last level is taken by those organizing the import of precursors¹⁰³ and chemical engineers,¹⁰⁴ while the bottleneck of the scheme is saved for the bosses ("investors" and production facility and channel owners). At this point, **the regular pyramid** starts, which is similar to that **of heroin distribution** (Figure 12).

What is new is that expensive qualified chemical engineers do not assume the risk to participate in direct production, as this is the most vulnerable link of the cycle.¹⁰⁵ The whole point of the hourglass structure is that the risk is greatest for those at the bottom of the hierarchy—the laboratory workers who function similarly to the street dealers. Thus, only moderate financial losses are incurred through confiscated equipment during police raids over laboratories. Therefore, laboratories are scattered all over the country, working on and off¹⁰⁶ to escape detection. Due to the increase of illegal workshops and the simplification of the production process, **the active ingredient in the ready tablets** (Alpha-methylphenethylamine) **captured by the police has seriously dwindled to levels several times as low as its proportion in the captagon** formerly produced in the state-owned pharmaceutical companies.

¹⁰¹ Although less than one hundred people at a time labor at amphetamine workshops, their total number over the last decade would amount to several hundred (as in the case of dealers).

¹⁰² Owners tend to buy the cheapest possible equipment, normally at a maximum cost of 50–60,000 leva.

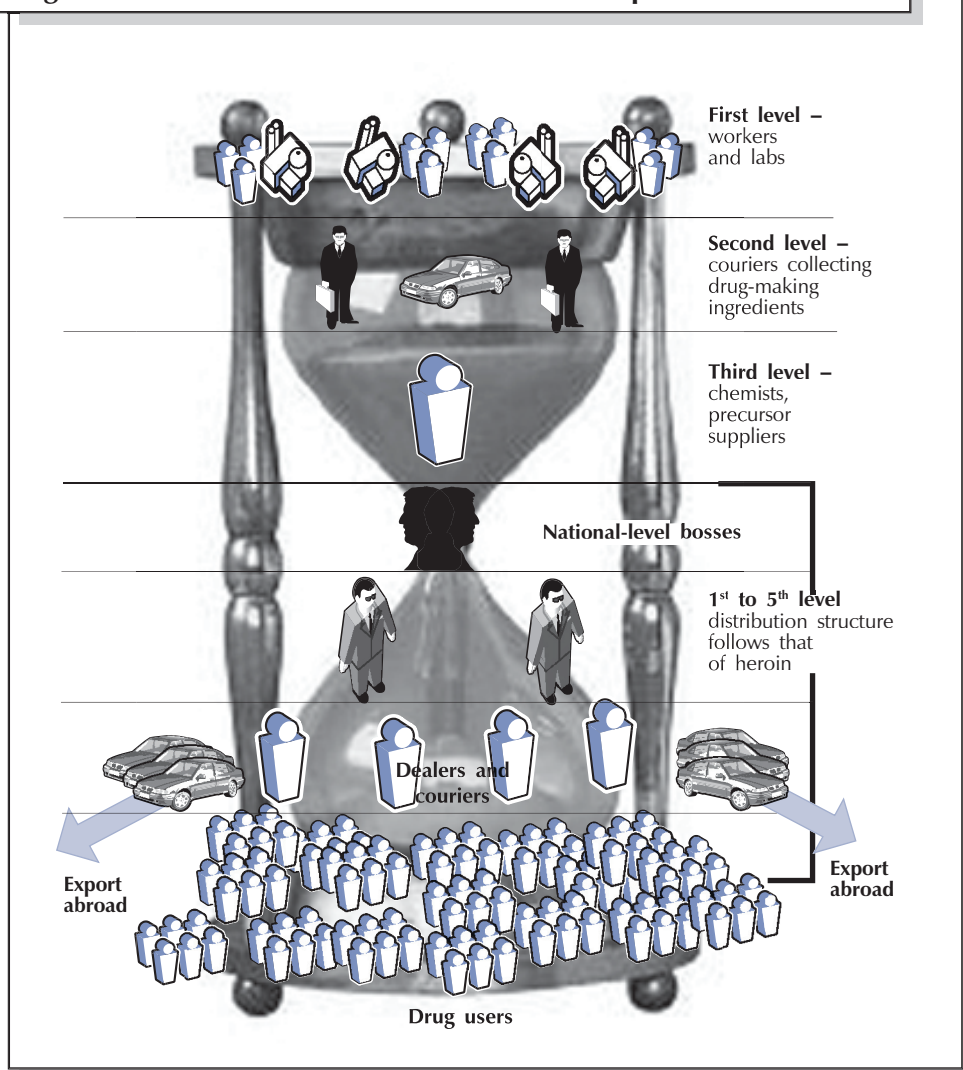
¹⁰³ There is strong evidence suggesting that to avoid the risks of border crossing, production facilities have been set up in Bulgaria for the total synthesis of precursors.

¹⁰⁴ According to special service experts, there are many indications that some of the most prominent Bulgarian chemists have been put under pressure and recruited by members of organized crime, particularly those who had taken part in developing technologies for the production of captagon. In proof of this assertion come the ostentatious killing of the daughter of a famous chemist, and the detention of several individuals working with non-controlled chemicals allegedly used in exotic technologies for the production of amphetamines.

¹⁰⁵ As illustrated by the Opitsvet case, any well-educated participant in the production threatens the whole venture with full disclosure, investors and organizers included. Although they had only very partial information, they managed to describe the whole scheme to the investigators assigned to the case. What saved the enterprise and its bosses was a fat sum of money given to a Supreme Court judge—something obviously possible back then. Convicted at first and second instance, defendants were found innocent at the third, where the court ruled that the 330 kilograms of amphetamine base powder and 666 kilograms of Benzylmethylketon had been used in a chemical experiment. According to a former high official at the NSCOC, the lab's "investor" paid for this verdict a total of \$150,000, of which "only" 50,000 were pocketed by the last-instance court lady judge, now retired.

¹⁰⁶ Special precaution are taken to conceal clandestine facilities, e.g. they will work in winter months, when electric power consumption generally increases, and will be housed in sites where the specific smells are harder to discern, such as cattle-sheds or buildings at the banks of fast-current rivers.

Figure 12. Production and distribution of amphetamines

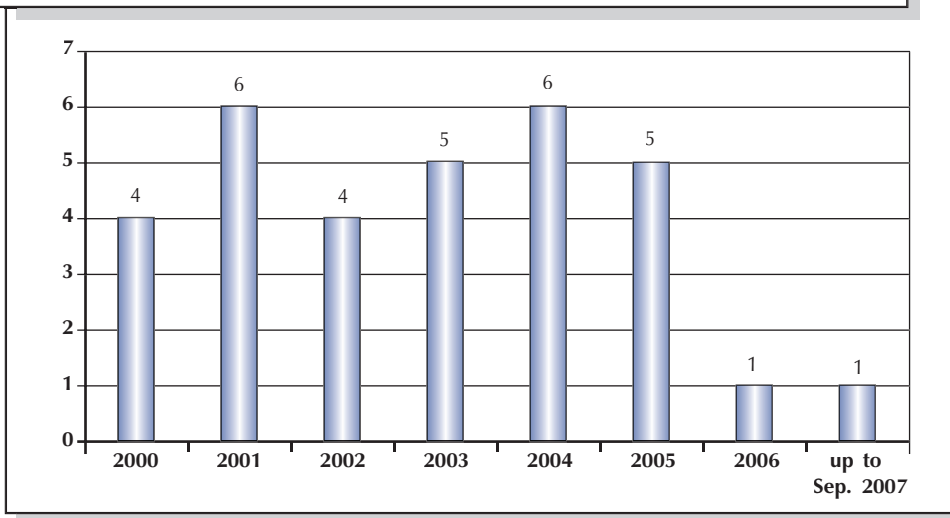


Interviewed special service officers claim that besides Turkish and Middle Eastern criminal groups Bulgarian amphetamine production is linked to the Serbian crime syndicates. It is not clear whether these are facilities set up in Bulgaria by Serbian organized crime for safety reasons after the Saber Action¹⁰⁷ or whether they had been participating in the production from the early days of the war in Yugoslavia. During the interviews some high officials from Bulgarian special services spoke about reports that after 2005 Serbians have been moving laboratories to Turkey and the Middle East where they can function at a lower risk. This can account for the smaller number of clandestine shops detected in recent years. However, it is equally likely that the drop in disclosures could be due to the turmoil that shook the NSCOC in 2005.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ After the assassination of Serbia’s Prime Minister Zoran Djindjić, police clampdowns on criminal enterprises compelled some underworld actors to run away to Bulgaria and manage all shipments to the Serbian drug market from Bulgaria throughout the operation.

¹⁰⁸ In the fall of 2005 five high-ranking officials at the NSCOC resigned in protest to pending restructuring of the service.

Figure 13. Amphetamine laboratories uncovered by the police



Amphetamines, whether made in Bulgarian or Serbian-owned laboratories, were of markedly poor quality, which has not improved in the last ten years.¹⁰⁹ It can be speculated that Middle East markets are successfully targeted with lower-quality drugs, whereas opportunities for trafficking them into the EU are less attractive for local producers.¹¹⁰

In contrast to imported drugs like heroin and cocaine, **the existence of local production strongly influences domestic consumption.** The amounts manufactured for overseas markets are many times as big as those for home retail, but the latter are of equally poor quality. Although this significantly diminishes local demand, no investments are made to improve the product. The extremely low retail prices alone are sufficient to dissuade both organized crime and user-dealers from importing better-quality drugs produced elsewhere.¹¹¹

The trends observed after 2001 confirm the dependence of retail distribution on domestic production. Crime leaders have opted for street price reduction through cheapening production, rather than improving the quality of amphetamines on offer. They gave up the tableting part of the production process, as it both raised the price and the risk of discovery. Most probably, this choice was the easiest route to profit, rather than a purposeful policy. On the contrary, making improvements would mean recruiting qualified chemical engineers, developing international contacts to import good precursors and, most importantly, expanding retail trade in Central and Western Europe. Apart from upgrading the manufac-

¹⁰⁹ The quality of amphetamines trafficked abroad was ascertained in the mid-1990s when the first large quantities were captured en route to Turkey by law enforcement bodies.

¹¹⁰ The reasons why Bulgarian-made amphetamines are not exported to Western Europe is not known. Apart from the obvious explanation that such low quality would not be competitive, several other are probable. For instance, the retail trade in the EU is supplied predominantly by amphetamine producers in Western and Central Europe, whereas in the Middle East, Bulgarian produced amphetamines are traded without much competition. In addition, local production may be financed and supplied with precursors by Middle Eastern structures and persons in control of their local retail markets interested in buying out Bulgarian output in full.

¹¹¹ Long-time users report that the first imported synthetic drugs were ecstasy pills smuggled in by Greek students studying at Bulgarian universities and sold for 30 leva.

tured amphetamines, they would have to start making ecstasy pills as well, or else they would never penetrate the lucrative West European markets. If such an expansion was to be undertaken, though, Bulgarian-run enterprises would have to compete not only with organized crime networks based in Holland, Belgium, Poland, the Czech Republic, etc, but also with the powerful transnational cocaine corporations.

Groups of Synthetic Drug Users

The price-cutting strategy increased the demand for powdered amphetamines that came in plastic sachets or in bars. The switch to amphetamine powder changed consumption patterns and new groups of users emerged. The **first group** comprises young experimental users who regard it as an opportunity to imitate the techniques learned from cocaine use, most often driven by the wish to actually consume cocaine, a model drug which they could not afford due to the very high price. Users usually pop designer drugs (excluding ecstasy) together with large amounts of alcohol to induce trips reminiscent of cocaine use. Thus, they both comply with the alcohol-related stereotypes of their milieu and seek different effects.

The **second group** of users comprises night clubbers motivated by the cheapness of amphetamines compared to alcohol prices at discos. They opt for the powdered variety as they can dilute it in mineral water or soda. Several respondents from various middle-sized towns agree that "you can have two sachets for 2–3 leva each that will last you the night, but with two vodkas it's more expensive". This is true mostly of towns with lower average income, where amphetamines are sold extremely cheap. Users quote an additional advantage of this mode of use—drug tests cannot detect amphetamines when the powder is dissolved in soda, and users are thus made invulnerable to police investigation.

A **third group** are occasional users (either marijuana users or people with no previous experience with any illegal psychoactive substances) who only try it a few times or switch to a regular combination use of amphetamines and alcohol/marijuana. Among the variety of users here, there are also students persuaded to use it prior to exams for maximum achievement. After discovering that amphetamines can help one pass an exam after only three or four days of preparation, some of them switch to regular use in pre-exam periods. High school students also tend to use amphetamines to improve scores in computer gaming, table football, pool or other races that require prolonged periods of high concentration. Another subgroup is that of extreme sports aficionados partaking in amateur car and motorcycle races, bungee jumping, etc. Usually, such users can afford the more upmarket cocaine, but they also consume amphetamines and methamphetamines to enhance performance. Yet another subgroup consists of teenage girls and young women that would pop amphetamines to lose weight and become psychologically dependent on them. Users from these groups may also switch to recreational use at clubs, concerts and home parties. Thus, amphetamines are becoming central to entertainment habits.

A **fourth group** of amphetamine users comes from the ranks of heroin addicts. A comparison is possible with Western Europe and the US in this respect, where

long-term users of heroin have been switching to cocaine. For a country like Bulgaria such a shift would hardly work, due to the very high price of cocaine. Therefore, amphetamines become a natural, cheap surrogate. The heroin crisis in 2002–2004 forced many heroin networks to look for a replacement drug. A survey among long-term heroin addicts, made it clear that in summer of 2003 already there was a sweeping wave of amphetamine use. In a subsequent survey Sofia and Bourgas seem to be the cities worst affected by the outbreak, with 40 % and 60 % of heroin addicts respectively having used amphetamines in the preceding month.¹¹²

Unit-Doses, Prices and Available Synthetic Drugs

Dosage with amphetamines is similar to heroin and prices match the amount in a unit. In Sofia, Varna, Bourgas and the environs there are various unit doses, such as fivers, tens, fifteens, twenties costing five, ten, fifteen, and twenty levs respectively.¹¹³ Like heroin, they are dosaged with the help of blister packs. For a fiver, the amphetamine powder is placed into the cavity of a Vitamin C blister card. For the larger doses, aspirin and lozenge blister strips are used. Thus, sellers do not need to weigh the dose with electronic scales. The ready doses are then packed in plastic or paper sachets. The preferred dose differs from area to area depending on the purchasing abilities of the population. Dealers continue to sell amphetamine pills as well. Police records of seized amphetamines indicate that while early in the decade this was the dominant form in which retail amphetamines came, currently only one tenth of all domestic market sales is occupied by pills, while the rest is amphetamine sulphate.¹¹⁴

The **linkages between production and distribution** are more apparent with amphetamine in pills. Police data about pills seized in mid-delivery, as well as interviews during the research confirm that the old captagon pills are only produced for export destinations accustomed to the product. The domestic market, on the other hand, is saturated with pills in a great variety of colors, shapes and imprints in order to stimulate demand in users who are expected to associate the brand with certain quality. Producers are obviously trying to copy the design of the ecstasy pills consumed in Western Europe, using the same logos—stars, smileys, Mitsubishi's, dollars, Armani's, Mickey Mouse's, etc. There are dealer networks and user circles who stick to single a brand. Often, however, new models are promoted with copy claims, such as "Be a star", "Stretch yourself like Pinko" and the like. In the larger local markets dealers are trying to create perceptions that certain pill types produce particular effects. The price range of pills is rather broad, starting from 2–3 levs (Plovdiv, the winter of 2006) up to 30 levs (Varna, the summer of 2007). Most commonly, though, pills cost 10–15 levs. Prices tend to be lower if bought earlier on in the selling of the batch or from a trusted connection. Often, users buy them in bulk to distribute in among friends. If one purchases 100–200 pills in total, the price can go down to 1.50–2 levs per pill.

¹¹² See: Bezlov, T., Barendrech, K., *Injection Drug Users in Bulgaria – Profiles and Risks*, Initiative for Health Foundation, Sofia, 2004.

¹¹³ Elsewhere in the country where incomes are lower a dose can sell down to 3 levs.

¹¹⁴ However, amphetamine pills are usually sold to better-off users whom the police capture much more rarely.

The supply of pills with particular shapes and logos depends on the availability of well-equipped, fast-working workshops ready to manufacture on demand. Some dealers claim that such units are often operating within cities. The "cooks", as they are sometimes called, also have the task to dilute the amphetamines, a process similar heroin dilution. One of the methods involves the adding of any substance that could mix with the amphetamine—from teeth cleaning powder to plaster of Paris. Sometimes, medical substances are added, such as caffeine or vitamins. There are also more sophisticated ways of cooking¹¹⁵ tailored to produce specific effects on users. For instance, amphetamines are mixed with bogus Viagra¹¹⁶ and advertised as a brand new recreational drug which is a sexual stimulant, whereas classic pills only enhance dancing and aural experiences. It compensates for amphetamine side effects such as erectile dysfunction, and more than that, amplifies sexual perceptions, enhances the libido and improves sexual performance. Master cooking can also seek to produce pills with hallucinogenic effects by adding ephedrine or in some cases even LSD. Apart from the various pills, the police have occasionally seized related synthetic drugs in the form of sticky mass known as "plasticine" which, after testing, has been proven to contain ephedrine and amphetamines. In addition to the widely used technologies for amphetamine production, a methamphetamine commonly referred to as "piko" is also produced in Bulgaria. Little is known about this production, but it is reportedly identical to the popular Czech drug Pervitin. The story circulated in the criminal world suggests that the technology was imported to Bulgaria by pimps from the town of Sliven long involved in prostitution rings in Central Europe.

Popular perceptions in Bulgaria undoubtedly define ecstasy as the top designer drug. Police records on seized drugs¹¹⁷ testify that MDMA is rarely used as the active ingredient. Population surveys¹¹⁸ show, however, that over half of the respondents reporting to have used synthetic drugs, claim that they use or have tried ecstasy. Inexperienced users seem to make a very rough distinction, relating content to the form in which drugs come; thus, all pills are ecstasy, and any powder is amphetamine. Another false distinction is between capsules and pills, where the former, especially if high-priced are regarded as the real thing. The popular belief is that "the expensive real ecstasy pills from Holland" are available for 20–30 leva, although if lucky, one can get them at 10 leva. Chemical analyses usually find ephedrine and amphetamines in pills that even long-term users claim to be authentic ecstasy. Probably, some ecstasy is imported irregularly, but police seizures so far, even of pills containing MDMA (invariably in minimum quantity and of poor quality), have always proven to be of local origin. It could also be surmised that like cocaine, upmarket pills are only affordable to foreign tourists or domestic upper middle-class members, who are generally not targeted (or are intentionally avoided) by the police.

¹¹⁵ "Cooking" is common jargon in many cities which refers to the preparation of more sophisticated synthetic drugs by dealers and users.

¹¹⁶ It is thought that various generic drugs for treating erectile dysfunction, such as sildenafil (most popular under the brand name Viagra), vardenafil (Levitra) and tadalafil (Cialis) are imported from Asia for the purpose.

¹¹⁷ Unfortunately, so far no independent evaluation has been made of the psychoactive substances sold in Bulgaria.

¹¹⁸ Data from the Vitosha Research representative surveys regularly conducted from 2002 to 2007.

Interviewed dealers and former police officers now running amphetamine businesses believe that there have been numerous attempts to manufacture ecstasy in Bulgaria. Some report this to have happened and several batches of standard quality drugs to have been produced in Southern Bulgaria. These units are again supposedly run by Bulgarian procurers operating in Holland and Belgium, who have imported the technology and established channels for smuggling in the right precursors. Certain police officials, though, claim it is much more likely that original Dutch ecstasy is occasionally imported than produced in domestic facilities.

Distribution

As described in the production section, there are **two distinct ways to deal synthetic drugs**, roughly definable as **"professional" and "amateur"**. The first type of dealing is done through the upmarket night venues, while the second is related to the alternative/underground scene. In the first case the most popular entertainment places in the largest towns are either set-up, or bought out by former racket protection businesses. Dancing clubs and discos are supplied with Bulgarian-made amphetamines, which are considered a booster to customers' fun. Owners allow in or support dealer networks to enhance the buzz of the place.¹¹⁹ In the late 1990s, it was common practice for bartenders and guards to inform clients about whom to call to get the stuff and they would receive a commission for each customer. Dealers, too, would sell openly, arrive in taxis, deliver at the entrance and get paid inside the joint without disturbance.

The more amateur distribution strand emerged earlier. The typical setting would be a club at an industrial hall selling cheap drinks, a hangout for pot smokers, but also for techno music fiends for whom designer drugs came were an emblem. Initially, such sites were supplied with ecstasy and (meth)amphetamines from Central and Western Europe, which were soon displaced by the cheap domestic variety to match customers' low solvency. Stuff was mainly marketed by music event organizers and DJs. Some of the interviewed in-crowd members claimed it was at that time local (and Balkan) crime enterprises got linked to amateur friend-to-friend dealing networks. This how the underground music scene gained easy access to inferior, but inexpensive locally produced synthetic drugs.

With the fast spawning of nightclubs, the boom of electronic dance culture, and the rising welfare of the general population after 2001 synthetic drug distribution entered the maturity stage. The new mainstream discotheques, bars and clubs targeted customer groups of specific lifestyles and incomes. The underground scene strove to satisfy newly sprung music tastes through concerts and raves, although with less variety than the dance music industry. Both entertainment scenes therefore provided a home-grown version of house parties. The friendly synthetic drug networks of the underground variety, however, were taken over by organized crime quite early in the decade, as it was later to happen on the marijuana market. Although DJs at techno parties and rave organizers continued

¹¹⁹ In the words of an interviewed career bartender involved in drug dealing, describing that period, "a place looks 'dead', in decline, if you don't see people enjoying themselves, jumping around and dancing for hours. Often, when a venue stopped being fancy and was half-empty, the incessant dancing of a few stoned youth would change the impression."

to gain most of their income through the sales of designer drugs, they had become inferior to crime bosses.¹²⁰

Synthetic drug distribution exploited most of the schemes known from the heroin and cannabis markets. All levels of the heroin hierarchy are employed. Method-wise, direct and networked phone sales, couriers and door-to-door deliveries are also present.

Synthetic drugs were also retailed within the cannabis distribution networks. As mentioned before, when organized crime took possession of soft drug networks, nearly half of all cannabis pushers also sold amphetamines both in the street (via phone orders) and around their circles of friends (the quasi open market).

Nevertheless, synthetic drug distribution has its own specifics that distinguish it from both the heroin and the cannabis networks. They center on **the night habits and musical tastes of users.**

Synthetic drug use is closely dependent on the type of nightlife settings where the drugs are sold and inside which they are consumed. In that respect the larger Bulgarian cities display several similarities to the 1990s upsurge of designer drug use in Spain.¹²¹ As in Spanish cities, there are several types of urban dealing venues for synthetic drugs. Users also gravitate around certain types of places. Within a city there are four rough zones. **One** is the inner city with the highest concentration of night clubs, discotheques, bars and restaurants. **Another zone** comprises places beyond the downtown area, at attractive location or outer residential estates. The **third zone** is located at the fringes of the city (ghettoized neighborhoods). They are marginal and frequented by local residents. A separate **fourth zone** is formed in student villages which are as densely packed with entertainment places as city centers. There is an altogether different waterfront zone in coastal cities, where joints and crowds are of the highest density.

Apart from cityscape considerations, designer drug (and to a lesser extent cocaine) distribution in the last couple of years at entertainment venues, it also depends on the type of venues. Roughly, they are divided into: strictly dancing places, drinking places with a dance floor, and drinking and eating places. The last type is rarely a retail spot, as when a person consumes synthetic drugs, their appetite for food subsides. Further types would be: bars, small clubs, discos and mega-discotheques.

Synthetic drugs use is not only dependent on the setting, but also on temporal factors. Nighttime, as is common in South Europe, has three stages—pre-party, party and after-party. Cities are at their most bustling early in the evening. Between 10 p.m. and 1 a.m. people bunch at private homes or public establishments and mostly drink alcohol or smoke marijuana if they go to an underground hangout. The second stage kicks off round midnight to 1 a.m.—the crowds go to clubs and discos that hold all-night parties. In recent years after-parties are

¹²⁰ Thus, any of them who broke the rules would be punished in the same way as deviant dealers are.

¹²¹ See: *Synthetic Drugs Trafficking in Three European Cities: Major Trends and Involvement of Organized Crime*, Gruppo Abele, in cooperation with TNI – IECAH and with the support of UNICRI, 2003.

increasingly in vogue, echoing nightlife trends in Western Europe. After-hour places are frequented after most discos are closed—at about 4.30 to 6 a.m. and sometimes go on until noon.

Synthetic drugs are used most sparingly in early evening, only by heavy users. By the time of the after-party 50-60% of those present have consumed some. The drugs are usually bought before one enters the venue, but a large part of users take them inside. They usually make a phone order and deliveries peak in between the pre-party and the party proper.

In the last couple of years a new trend has emerged—together with entertainment spots, designer drugs are increasingly used in private homes. A large number of users choose this setting due to the growing prices at public places and as an alternative to alcohol consumption. In cities smaller than the metropolitan Sofia and Varna, especially in university towns, users stick to home environments and the cheap amphetamines sold locally, thus saving money from night entertainment in town. It is precisely the smaller town context that explains the exponential growth in synthetic drugs use.¹²² New ways to treat a friend have emerged in Bulgarian youth culture. It is now common to offer a girl a "sweetmeat" or a "line" instead of buying her a drink. A young professional (for instance, an interior designer) would not buy his buddies the usual case of beer, but opt for 2 grams of amphetamine instead.

Drugs are sold in public (usually close to drinking or dancing places and concert venues, and much more rarely inside them) **by the so-called "semi-closed networks"**. Whether at an underground music event or at upmarket night spots, drugs are not normally sold to strangers. Even if the street dealer does not know the client's name or if it is another dealer's client, he would only sell the drug to a "face" he has met elsewhere "hanging out with the right people". Such peculiar face control¹²³ is indispensable for street dealers of synthetic drugs and cocaine.

If observed more closely, this safety strategy can be described in detail as follows: the number of users of a regular night joint¹²⁴ with 200–300 visitors on a

¹²² Interviewees working in bars, clubs and other nightlife venues claim that they make more money by letting in synthetic drug dealers than by selling alcohol.

¹²³ The practice of face control already commonly used in Western European nightlife was first introduced during security checks at night clubs. The crime world was quick to adopt this technique to get into guarded venues, but also for their own purposes. It has become an essential survival technique for pimps, drug dealers and criminal hit squads.

¹²⁴ The role of joint owners is key to describing drug dealing networks covering night spots. It is common knowledge that many of the clubs in large cities are still owned by members of the former racketeer groups. Some owners deliberately allow the use of synthetic drugs inside the place, so that it looks livelier with drugged youngsters bouncing about. The better part of joints, though, have special measures installed to keep drugs out. As this is a highly competitive business, in recent years owners and managers of night clubs have been extremely cautious in three areas—legal employment contracts for all of their staff, selling licensed alcohol, and the prevention of drug-related incidents (including drugs sneaked in by competitors). Breaking any of these three rules could lead to the closure of the joint, which may mean dropping out of business permanently. To avoid problems, owners pay the police to warn them about coming checks of their premises. Interviewed high police officials claimed that in recent years drugs have rarely been found in searches of night spots. In the words of one interviewee, "In the past, when we did sudden checks, the floors of the clubs would turn white from the pills and sachets thrown

weekend night, is roughly 50–70 persons. In this case, five or six dealers service three to four joints and know all their regular customers.¹²⁵ Larger venues often accommodate over 1,000 people at a time and 3,000 clients drop in throughout the night. The number of users in such places is much bigger, yet dealers would not venture selling to strangers. Any first-time buyer needs to find an intermediary known to the dealer. In case they approach the dealer independently, they need to have frequented the place often enough for the dealer to have remembered their face.

Alternatively, dealers sell only to a small number of **privileged clients**. Interviews with such clients suggested that the principle of between-friends distribution still holds. More often than not, buyers are prone to purchasing from friends, from whom they would also take larger quantities. This approach enhances clients' feeling of safety from police traps, and their confidence that the stuff bought is of good quality (which is especially important having in mind, the quality of most drugs in Bulgaria) and at a discount price. Thus, the person who has a dealer friend would collect the orders of the people he hangs out with for the dealer to perform,¹²⁶ winning a bulk purchase discount and being certain to buy decent quality. This is how the friendly networks reduce the risk for dealers. The latter are normally from the same social group as their customers—insiders, such as secondary school and university students drawn into the drug business in various ways, but retaining the lifestyle of their community. They work professionally, although they may also study or have a legal job. They are attached to the area boss (supervisor) and may have trouble quitting. The best case scenario for them is to be allowed to walk out of business after finding a replacement to succeed them.

The third approach resembles the user-seller segment of heroin distribution. These are young heavy users that have special appointment phones. Each passes the synthetic drugs to a large number of friends and acquaintances. They are usually on standby for quality, quantity and price-wise special offers of dealers. In contrast to the heroin distribution model, though, amphetamine users are not dependent on a single dealer, but can get supplies from up to ten to fifteen different sources. Some specialize in a particular substance, while others sell everything. If one is to make a visual representation of these networks, it will resemble a thick web made up of dozens of dealers, selling down to hundreds of heavy users, who in their turn supply three or four circles of friends. Quite probably, it is the retailers at this level that later become dealers. At some point they may meet a wholesaler ready to offer them a significant quantity discount. In such cases, the very low prices can bring huge profits.

out of customers' pockets. Now we only find a sachet or two on rare occasions." It is not clear what the links are between bar and club guards and street dealers. Guards claim that all such deals are done outside the joints. Some bartenders claim that the staff working at those places makes bigger profits from clients who have asked about a drug dealer or a hooker than from the alcohol they sell.

¹²⁵ The total number of faces a dealer has to remember then is no more than 280 (assuming that they tend for four joints each with 70 amphetamine users).

¹²⁶ Privileged clients are surveyed in advance about the volume their circle of friends is likely to order.

In this context, the role of the wholesalers ought to be discussed. As organized crime groups run the local production of amphetamines, it can be assumed that they also control wholesaling. Dealers and police officers, however, report that in recent years *shano* (free players) have been extremely common. Possibly, wholesalers manage to make independent orders to manufacturers, overstepping the area principles of organized crime control. The police have caught several wholesalers so far, who are not subservient to any of the bosses that have carved the bigger cities between themselves. These people act like **traveling salesmen**, delivering amphetamines to a number of criminal leaders in various cities. Strikingly, they run their business in a market oriented way, driven by local demand and competing with wholesalers fully subordinate to organized crime structures. This leads to two suggestions: either some free enterprise is granted to producers to sell to clients of their choice, or regional bosses try to push the extra quantities not exported to the Middle East to domestic areas in someone else's control. The *shano* are thus able to supply friendly networks, selling by the familiar faces model. This is obviously the approach that keeps such a person at a safe distance from both the police and local drug cartels. As a result, in the last couple of years these semi-closed networks have grown at a fast pace in middle-sized towns.

Another factor that helps phone-sales within friend communities is that the user-sellers who operate them are mostly middle-class. Both crime leaders and the police prefer to avoid pressure or violence against them.

Some fragmentary data suggest that those networks of free black market entrepreneurs order the quantities they need to various amphetamine producing facilities across the country. It is odd that wholesalers do not buy better-quality synthetic drugs from Central and Western Europe, as do their counterparts in Spain and Italy.¹²⁷ Perhaps the basic reason is the clear **stratification by user income of the market of stimulant drugs**. Cheap amphetamines are massively consumed by poorer individuals, whereas the well-off opt straight for cocaine. It can be forecasted that with Bulgaria's accession to the EU, distribution networks for imported designer drugs, ecstasy in particular, will emerge, especially taking into account the plummeting prices of this group of controlled substances.

2.2.4. The Cocaine Market

Bulgaria's domestic consumption of cocaine is much below Western European levels, yet it forms a market in its own right that enjoys special attention from both distributors and users. A number of surveys suggest that cocaine (dubbed "white stuff") is considered an elitist drug of the highest possible quality, coveted by most users, but so high-priced that it is affordable only to a select few. However, in the last five years there has been a clear-cut trend of growing use. The national population surveys¹²⁸ have captured a rapid increase in the share

¹²⁷ See: *Synthetic Drugs Trafficking in Three European Cities: Major Trends and Involvement of Organised Crime*, Gruppo Abele, in cooperation with TNI – IECAH and with the support of UNICRI, 2003.

¹²⁸ Since 2002 the Center for the Study of Democracy and Vitosha Research have performed six annual victimization surveys containing a significant bloc of questions on the use of the most widespread psychoactive substances.

of users who "have tried cocaine" from 0.1 % in 2002 to 0.8 % in 2007. The National Focal Point on Drugs and Drug Addictions in its survey captured an even higher portion—1.1 %.¹²⁹ The relative share peaks for the age group 18–34 where it is 2.4 %. Cocaine, it turns out, is used by a socially heterogeneous group of people—heroin users (10% of whom declare to have used cocaine in the last month), university students (1.2% report use in the preceding month, and 4.9%—in their lifetime),¹³⁰ and secondary school students (1.6 % stating to have tried in their lifetime).¹³¹

Cocaine is most widely consumed among high-income groups, such as skilled professionals and managers. However, surveys among this group are hard to conduct. The in-depth interviews conducted with several members show that the **consumption pattern** resembles that of amphetamines—the consumption peaks on Friday and Saturday nights, Christmas and Easter time, summer and winter vacations.

Dealers distinguish between two relatively well-defined user groups. The **first group** consists of well-off people that buy only cocaine. Most of them have nothing in common with racketeer businesses. They regard amphetamines as low-quality and risky and have unrelenting requirements about the purity of cocaine. They go to smaller VIP clubs, rather than popular discotheques. A large part of them prefer joint where a specific type of local music called *chalga* is played. These are places that also serve food, which is absent in amphetamine use. Private home parties are also typical of the all-cocaine group. These are closed-up circles where cocaine is on offer alongside classy liquor. Dealers supplying stuff to such parties claim that often some of the leading underworld bosses would supervise the organization of these deliveries in order to gain access to exclusive professional communities, e.g. of managers, policemen, customs officials, high-ranking magistrates, etc. Police statistics show that this user group is practically immune to law enforcement. This is due not just to their hermetic organization and high social status, but also to police reluctance to penetrate those circles.

The **second group** comprises people who use cocaine only occasionally. As a rule, they use amphetamines and only sometimes can afford cocaine. Their cocaine consumption has a strong influence on amphetamine sales. Some dealers have claimed that if a client of theirs has cocaine on Friday, he would refrain from amphetamines not only on the next day, but also in the next few weeks. Part of this group reverts to cocaine only as they get older and a more affluent life style becomes affordable.

Cocaine distribution has a number of peculiarities. In large cities it is completely independent from the other submarkets. Police officers and dealers testify that in Sofia, it is controlled by VIS,¹³² represented by a drug boss named Take. His

¹²⁹ *Annual Report on Drugs and Drug Addictions Issues in Bulgaria, 2006*, National Focal Point on Drugs and Drug Addictions.

¹³⁰ *University Students and Psychoactive Substances 2006*, national representative survey among Bulgarian students, National Focal Point on Drugs and Drug Addictions.

¹³¹ National Center for Drug Addictions and National Center for Public Health Protection, *National Population Survey on the Use of Alcohol and other Drugs in Bulgarian Schools (9-12 Grade)*, 2003.

¹³² See Chapter 1 for details of the origins on this group.

proxy, nicknamed Sako has operational control over large deliveries and is accountable to the boss. The drug is distributed among wholesalers, specialized cocaine phone appointment dealers and area dealers of other drugs. The cocaine branch has certain agreements with area supervisors, but they have no operational functions in the distribution itself. Dealer networks from the other branches are in customer-seller relations with the cocaine network, making purchases when their clients want cocaine and selling it at a profit. The regular cocaine users buy straight from cocaine dealers. It is not clear what rent street dealers who sell near entertainment spots pay to area supervisors, but the fact that they can work undisturbed is a sign of previous agreements between them and the supervisors. The situation in Varna is similar. Up to 2005–2006, cocaine distribution had an independent vertical structure headed by a crime boss nicknamed the Camel. After he left Bulgaria, one of the two retailing segments was inherited by Vesko "Politsaya" (The Policeman), whereas upper-level distribution is now handled by a guy called Sevata.

Bourgas is the only large city where the cocaine market is considered to be under the control of a single crime organization (up until 2007), the so called Pomorie group whose boss is Mityo "Ochite" (The Eyes). As mentioned earlier, however, drug distribution in Bourgas has independent segments dedicated to each drug and serviced by an autonomous criminal network. After Mityo Ochite was arrested, the cocaine structure started to fall apart. In the summer of 2007, cocaine in the largest markets in the district—the sea resorts of Slanchev Bryag and Nesebar, is handled by the Sofia division of VIS.

Little information is available about the sources of cocaine dealt in Bulgaria. It is particularly scarce after the assassination of Poli Pantev, believed to control cocaine supplies (who allegedly stole a large batch from a Colombian cartel, part of which was later retailed in Bulgaria). Neither the price, nor the exact amounts of cocaine imports are known. The nickname of the local crime lord largely involved in cocaine trafficking is Brendo. Police sources disclose that he does not supply the domestic market, though. Cocaine mules from Bulgaria have been caught in Europe (Spain, Holland, Italy) and Latin America, but their activities have not proven to have any relation with the home market. Whether these were "swallowers"¹³³ carrying only small amounts or yacht crews escorting tons of cocaine, in none of the cases the smuggled drugs were directed at the Bulgarian market.

2.3. DRUG MARKET SIZE, TRENDS AND POSSIBLE SCENARIOS FOR THE FUTURE OF DRUG DISTRIBUTION

Before reviewing the distribution dynamics of the four main groups of psychoactive substances, an attempt for assessing the size of the overall market will be made. The calculations presented below should be regarded as provisional, as data about the number of users and the scale of consumption, as well as the important price/quality relationship, is rather fragmentary.

¹³³ People who transfer cocaine in their stomachs by swallowing small packages of it.

2.3.1. Drug Market Size

By the most conservative assessments **heroin** users in Bulgaria are between 15,000 and 25,000. These buyers are not simultaneously present on the market. As shown by quantitative surveys conducted in a number of cities, at least one third of this group normally refrains from use for a variety of reasons. Most often this portion of users consists of people serving a sentence, undergoing treatment, staying abroad¹³⁴ or have quitted, which is usually temporary. This means that the number of active users at one at the same time is around 10,000–16,000. Surveys investigating the average number of doses have found that they are dependent on the current quality of heroin and on the number of gaps appearing in distribution at a certain time. In the period 2003–2005 the average number of daily doses used varies between 1.5 and 1.8.¹³⁵ The average price per standard dose (of any amount or quality) throughout the country ranges from 5 to 10 levs. Multiplying the number of users by the average daily dose and the average dose price, one gets **an annual turnover on the heroin market ranging from 32 to 105 million levs**. This size is estimated on the basis of street prices, but part of the heroin is used by dealers of the highest standing. The research team considers that the above figure is probably equal to one fifth of actual heroin consumption.

The size of the **cannabis market** is even more difficult to estimate, as use tends to be uneven and so far no quantitative surveys have been dedicated particularly to this substance. National representative surveys among secondary school and university students provide data about the proportions of these groups that have tried cannabis, but do not capture consumption patterns. The only fairly reliable estimates are those of daily sales in the big and medium-sized cities. Thus, it can be assessed that annual cannabis consumption is between 15,000 and 20,000 kilos. Street prices range widely, depending on the type of location, whether the local market is controlled by a monopoly and other factors. The average price in the first half of 2007 in the largest cities is approximately 3,300 levs per kilo (or 3.3 per gram). Thus, **annually the soft drug market amounts to 50–66 million levs**. Available data indicate a tenfold growth of the soft drug market compared to 2002–2003, with an annual growth of 3.2 to 5 million levs.¹³⁶ This market could probably grow by the end of the year, as currently criminal enterprises are trying to push the price of 10 levs per gram on its largest segment—the capital Sofia.

The synthetic drug market is as hard to assess. With 7,000 to 10,000 regular users who consume on a daily or weekend basis (Thursday to Sunday) and an average cost of 50–60 levs according to the in-depth interviews, the average amount generated per year would be 14–24 million levs. There are also around 30,000–40,000 occasional users. According to available data their monthly expenses are 20–40 levs, which amounts to an annual consumption of between 7 and 19 million levs. If the two groups are combined,¹³⁷ the size of **the synthetic drug market would reach 21 to 43 million levs per year**.

¹³⁴ In-depth studies have shown that part of heroin addicts either seek jobs abroad, as do many Bulgarians, or go abroad for treatment, as they believe they cannot get effective treatment at affordable prices at home.

¹³⁵ Bezlov, T., *Heroin Users in Bulgaria One Year after the Outlawing of the Dose for "Personal Use"*, Open Society Institute & Initiative for Health Foundation, Sofia, 2005.

¹³⁶ See Bezlov, T., *The Drug Market in Bulgaria*, Center for the Study of Democracy, Sofia, 2003.

¹³⁷ The various user groups of these drugs are provisionally divided into two basic groups to facilitate calculation.

The cocaine segment is most assessment-proof of all, as the regular users are few, gathered in small elite communities. Incidental use is also observed with low-income strata, such as secondary school students and unemployed heroin abusers. Calculations are further made difficult if one is to consider the significant consumption by foreign tourists in the seaside and winter resorts for which very few data are available. Some drug dealers who have close observations on the market in big cities, such as Sofia, Varna and Bourgas claim that in the last year, cocaine sales have increased to roughly half the market of synthetic drugs. Thus, **the cocaine market may be estimated at around 10–20 million levs annually.**

The sales at the four segments taken together provide an annual estimate of the **overall drug market amounting to between 108 and 234 million levs per annum.**

2.3.2. Drug Market Trends

As noted before, developments at the outset of the new century blurred the differences between distribution patterns of the separate illegal psychoactive substances at the middle level. The usual approach in most towns is to have one dispersal structure selling all types of drugs. At the lowest level, though, street dealers seem to specialize in particular drugs. Although the processes on the different submarkets and distribution levels are often indistinguishable, for the sake of clarity the trends on three separate levels will be described.

The Street Level

This level comprises dealers with various specializations, but nevertheless, the most prominent trend that has affected the markets of all drug types in the last four-five years are the several crises in heroin distribution. The main factor is probably the decreasing number of heroin users due to several factors. First, adolescents are already making a clear distinction between heroin and the rest of drugs. Second, an increasing number of clients are enrolled in methadone treatment programs. Third, migration to Western Europe either for the purpose of seeking better treatment programs, or jobs, has grown with the waiver of Schengen visas. As a result of harsher law-enforcement and judicial measures more people are convicted to imprisonment.¹³⁸ According to some estimates around one third of all 12,000 people serving an imprisonment sentence, have used heroin. As a result, the number of heroin users at large diminishes, which restricts the appearance of new users. As described earlier, long-time heroin addicts play a key role in street distribution. When their numbers dwindle, this affects the availability of pushers and dealers, and consequently, less new users get hooked. These developments have shaken distribution networks, depriving them of the steady income from heroin dealing and bringing about financial gaps that limit the supplies. To compensate for these crises, distributors resort to diluting the available heroin even further. Financial hang-ups are not only affecting the import, but also professional violence providers, so that violence is increasingly applied in a haphazard manner.

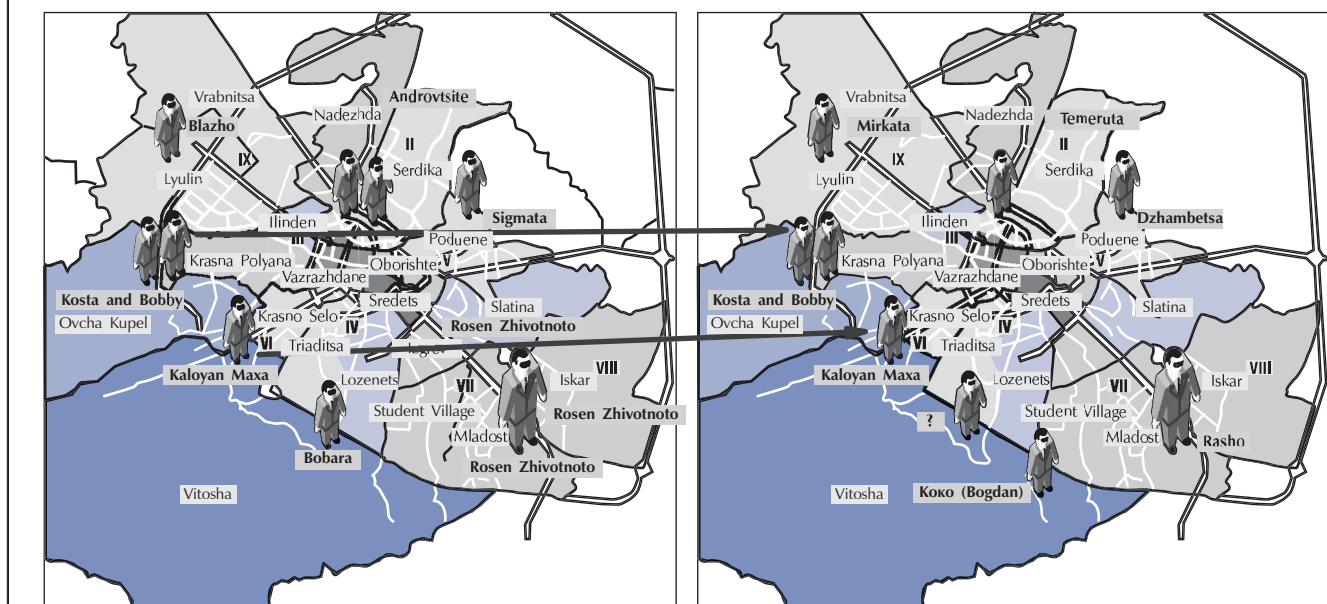
¹³⁸ Not all of the sentences were issued for drug dealing; some of them are for other criminal offenses.

While **the heroin market has lost dealers, pushers and profits**, the **opposite trend** is observed on the cocaine, soft and synthetic drug markets. The number of structures involved in their distribution is on the rise. However, control over dealers of these drugs is much harder to apply than it is with heroin. In the last couple of years, apart from the increase of the total number of dealers, free lancers have also recurrently increased.

The Middle Distribution Levels

The changes at grassroots level that occurred 2002 also caused reshuffles on the upper levels. Criminal bosses are nearly immune from law-enforcement, yet internal conflicts in their circles often lead to clashes in which extreme violence is used. Such events are particularly typical for the largest district market in Bulgaria—the capital city. A “war of the areas” into which Sofia is divided started in 2002 when one of the most powerful area bosses, Anton Miltenov “Klyuna” (The Beak), attempted to gain control over the whole district. This conflict indicates that violence in the underworld is indispensable when drug market (re)distribution is concerned. They inevitably reverberate in related criminal markets, such as consumer goods smuggling, car thefts, prostitution, etc. In 2004 the conflict was put to an end through the assassination of Klyuna after which the capital was carved in two big domains. The boundary that divides them, as explained by interviewed police officers and drug dealers goes along one of the key roads Bulgaria Blvd. and down the Perlovska River that crosses the city. Thus, the new Southern zone is controlled by Zlatko “Baretata” (The Beret), while the remainder of the city is held by Pesho “Shtangata” (The Rod). Two years later, a new clash led to the ousting of Pesho Shtangata and a new boss called Rasha came to preside over nearly the whole local market.

Figure 14. Fourth level area bosses in Sofia



The succession of the figures that control the district also leads to reshuffles at the top of the constituent areas in Sofia. Comparing area supervisors through the years, it can be seen that only two of those who ran an area in 2003 remain supervisors in 2007.

Table 4. Sofia drug distribution areas and their bosses

	2003	2007	
Area 1	Rosen "Zhivotnoto" (The Animal)	Rasho	Apart from his role as the boss of most distribution areas, Rasho also controls directly the most lucrative Area 1. This is why the respective network serves not just the large Mladost residential project (Area 1), but also nearly the rest of Sofia. After a 2–3-year absence Rosen Zhivotnoto has also reappeared in the area and controls synthetic and soft drug distribution.
Area 2	Androvtsite (The Andreys)	Temeruta	Until the assassination of Bobara in 2006 the area was divided
Area 3	Kosta and Bobby	Kosta and Bobby	
Area 4	"Bobara" (The Beaver)	Kosta, Bobby and "Kasorakiya" (The Short-armed Man)	Kosta and Bobby have been trying to conquer the area after the assassination of Bobara, but have come across severe competition. This area is also very lucrative, as it covers the whole of downtown Sofia.
Area 5	Sigmata	Dzhambetsa	
Area 6	Kaloyan Maxa	Kaloyan Maxa	A distinctive feature of this area is the <i>shano</i> (free rider) that runs his own phone distribution system.
Area 7	Rosen Zhivotnoto	Koko (Bogdan)	
Area 8	Rosen Zhivotnoto	Banzo	
Area 9	Blazho	Mirkata	This area is least controlled by organized crime and most populated by active shano.

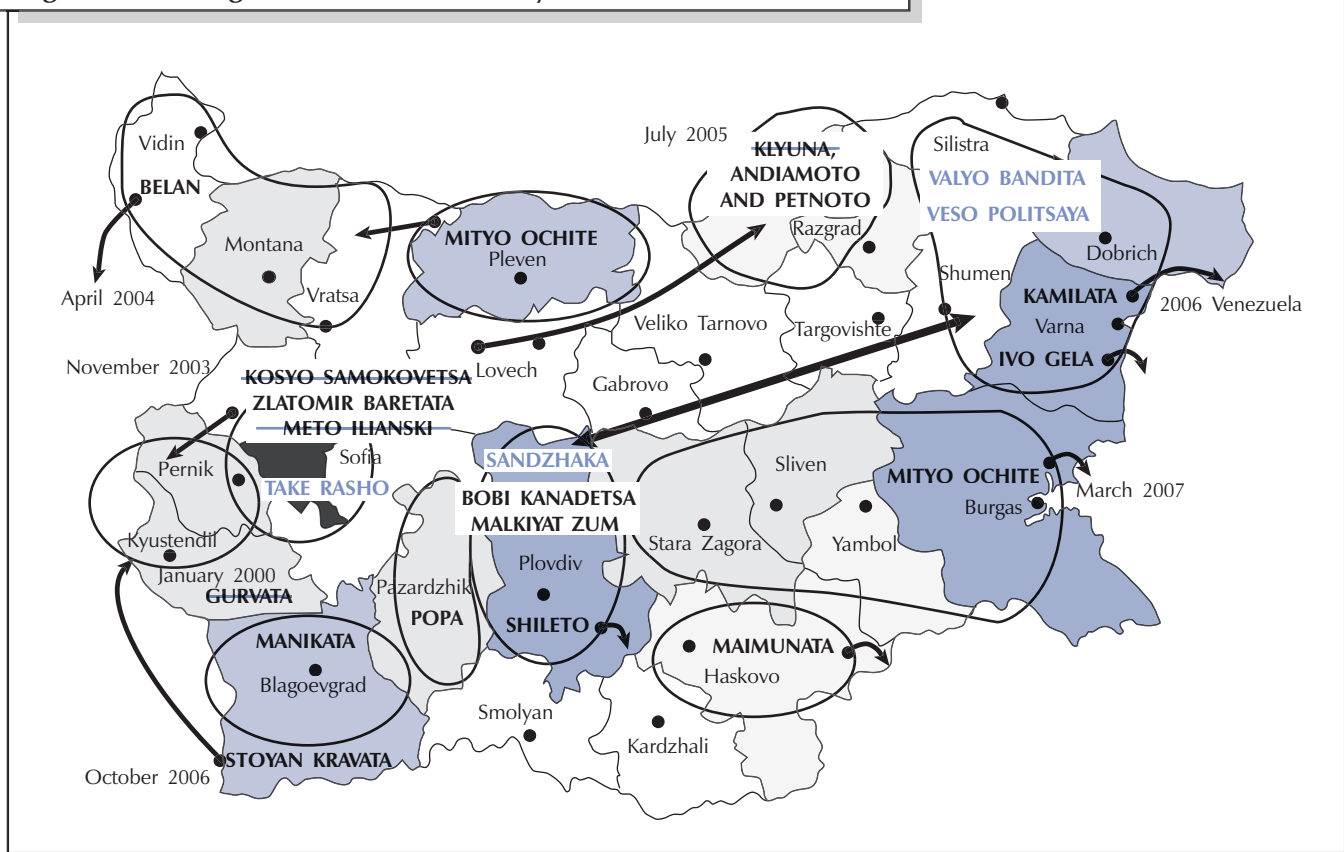
Such repeated conflicts can also be observed in Varna. After several successive replacements of supervisors have been made, currently the city is controlled by two criminal leaders. Based on the accounts of police officers and dealers, Valyo "Bandita" (The Bandit) is in charge of the following residential projects: Vladislavovo, Vazrazhdane, Mladost, Kaisieva Gradina, Aksakovo and Asparuhovo, whereas Vesko Politsaya runs the distribution in Chaika and Levski, as well as the resort of Zlatni Pyasatsi.

In smaller towns, the middle level is structured differently. Due to the narrower scale of the market, even when a local crime leader controls the distribution of all groups of drugs across the whole town, he still makes less profit than the pettiest of supervisors in Sofia and Varna. At the same time, the "tenure" of such bosses is rarely longer than two or three years.

Top Level Developments

Looking at the top ranks of the drug market bosses after 2003, it seems that already in the summer of 2007 none of the top figures were the same. Some of the old bosses were assassinated or died, others emigrated or were extradited, still others quit voluntarily or charges were pressed against them (see Figure 14). Kosyo Samokovetsa was shot dead in 2003 in Amsterdam. Meto Iliyanski disappeared in the same year. They were two of the three drug lords in Sofia. In April 2004, Belana, the Montenegrin national who led drug proliferation in North-Western Bulgaria was extradited. Anton Miltenov "Klyuna" was killed in July, 2005. Two other drug bosses were imprisoned in 2006—Stoyan "Kravata" (The Cow) and Maninkata. Kamilata emigrated to South America, while the last notorious drug boss active in the period covered by the preceding survey, Mityo Ochite, was arrested in the spring of 2007.

Figure 15. Drug market distribution by individuals in control



Despite the emergence of new leading figures, such as Rasho (in Sofia), Sandzhaka (in Plovdiv), Valyo Bandita and Vesko Politsaya (in Varna) the dissolution of the top level is increasingly apparent. The larger distribution areas are left uncontrolled. In contrast to the 1990s and the early years of this century, criminal figures are much less willing to risk having legal businesses together with gray and drug-related ventures. The most prominent among them have opted to quit the drug market altogether and invest their savings in the legal economy.

2.3.3. Possible Scenarios for the Future of Drug Distribution

The future of drug distribution can be lined up under three basic scenarios drawn from observations of its current state and the potential routes of its development.

The **pessimistic** scenario draws on the possibility of recurrent growth in heroin consumption. A sizeable group of heroin abusers will be released from prison. It is safe to suppose that a lot of these people will relapse into their addictive habits due to the lack of sufficient and effective treatment programs. The supply chains will be revitalized, as top-level control is lifted and mid-level bonds between Bulgarian and Turkish drug networks are strengthened. Plovdiv is already an example of this trend. With a better sustained market, the quality of the heroin on offer will improve and it will become easier for first-time users to get addicted (in contrast to the present when the concentration of diamorphine is really low). The young generation will not be scared off heroin use, as there will be less examples of old addicts available. The synthetic drug submarket will develop fast due to the ease of travel and transfer of precursors and drugs from the rest of the EU, and a synthetic drug outbreak could possibly occur. Currently, marijuana use is still below the level in the rest of the former communist countries, but it will steadily grow. The use of cocaine will become much more common, as the population's income increases and, similar to Spain, it will also have to supply the burgeoning tourist industry.

The **realistic** scenario is based on the preservation of the status quo. Heroin use will increase, but this will be followed by a drop in consumption. However low in efficiency, the existing treatment programs will manage to draw new users and help them stay out of street pushing. There will be no snow ball effect or a heroin outbreak as the one in the late 1990s. The synthetic and soft drugs on offer will improve in quality, but also grow in price, which will prevent an uncontrollably rapid growth of consumption. Bulgarian youth will preserve their conservative attitudes to psychoactive substances, and although many will engage in experimental use, few will become regular users.

The **optimistic** scenario assumes that the state will follow the model of developed democracies and increase public spending on treatment and social integration programs, instead of applying harsh punitive measures. Law enforcement bodies will be restructured, so as to raise their efficiency and coordination between the police engaged in tackling street level drug dealing and anti-organized-crime units which will be able to deal blows to the middle and top drug market levels. Currently, law enforcement affects only the lowest levels of distribution and it is precisely the lack of efficient inter-agency exchange that keeps the bosses safe. In addition, prevention and outreach programs able to target real problem areas and groups will be put in place and regular assessments of their effectiveness will be made.