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## **New Challenges in the Narcotics World**

Nicoleta-Elena Buzatu

*"Dimitrie Cantemir" Christian University, Ph.D Candidate Law School, University of Bucharest,  
 nicoleta\_buzatu@yahoo.com*

**Abstract:** The consumption of narcotics is one of the problems the international world is confronted with nowadays; its direct or indirect effects lead to the conclusion that it represents a worrying phenomenon meant to be taken into account by the international programs of co-operation. In contrast with the mature population, the younger population is much more receptive to the new, much more attracted by new experiments and, consequently, by risks. The narcotics flagellum is one of the most complex, profound and dramatic phenomena met with in the contemporary world. Narcotization is the morbid habit of repeatedly taking and using ever higher doses of more or less toxic substances able to generate a psychological and physical addiction to them. Unhappily due to the lack of information, people think that the illegal substances only – heroine, marijuana, cocaine, etc. – are considered drugs. Not long ago there appeared the so-called “mixes of ethno-botanical plants” that are perfectly legal, and many consumers have replaced narcotics - as marijuana, for example - with plant mixes. According to explanations given by the Ethno-botanical Explanatory Dictionary, ethno-biology is a branch that studies the mutual relationship between man and plant. In Romania, ethno-botanical plants are sold under the generic names of “aroma therapeutic” or “ethno-botanical” plants. The numerous researches meant to decode the molecular and biochemical structure of these herbs, the researchers found that consumers are described as facing hallucinogenic effects caused by some synthetic substances - cannabinoids - added by manufacturers.

**Keywords:** drug; illicit; legal high; psychoactive substances; hallucinogenic plants

### **1. Introduction**

The last three years have confronted our country with new types of narcotics which are nothing but substances obtained from plants growing on various fields of the planet or substances considered to be legally obtained. The number of consumers is rapidly increasing either because of curiosity or because of addiction, as these substances have replaced the so-called “classic narcotics.” The advantage is that legal, as they appear to be, they can be bought directly from the shops of destination at available prices for everybody to be able to afford. These shops make advantageous offers, attracting the consumers with discounts, fidelity cards, etc.

In late 2008, several cannabinoids were detected in herbal smoking mixtures or so-called incense/room odorisers. Typical of these were Spice Gold, Spice Silver and Yucatan Fire, but many other products later appeared. They do not contain tobacco or cannabis but when smoked, produce effects similar to those of cannabis. These products are typically sold via the Internet and in ‘head shops’. The following countries control ‘Spice’ and/or other synthetic cannabinoids: Denmark, Germany, Estonia, France, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Austria, Poland, Romania, Sweden and UK. In Poland, JWH-018 and some of the claimed constituents of ‘Spice’ are controlled substances. In Germany, a

fast-track regulation controls JWH-018 and CP 47,497. In Austria, Estonia and France, JWH-018, HU-210, and CP 47,497 are scheduled drugs; in addition to those, in Sweden and Lithuania JWH-073 is also classified as a narcotic. Luxembourg seems to have adopted an analogue approach by referring to 'synthetic agonists of cannabinoid receptors'. The UK has adopted generic definitions and is expected to introduce control measures for a wide range of synthetic cannabinoids. Other Member States are also considering control measures.<sup>1</sup>

Profiting by the fact that in Romania these substances are not considered to be illicit, certain companies or natural persons import and commercialize them especially by Internet obtaining comfortable profits (Tone, 2009, p. 195). Here are but a few examples of such substances: Party Snuff Powder: Special Gold New Formula Party Snuff Powder, Magic Kristal Party Snuff Powder, Pure By Magic Party Snuff Powder, Frenzy, Crankd, Special gold 2011, Silver, Diamond Crystal, Nos, Blast; Herbal Smoke Blends<sup>2</sup>: DJ, Bonzai Winter Boost, Maya, Bonzai Summer Boost, WWW:, Boom, Remix, Ninja, Katana, Diesel, Monkees, OHg, M1, M6, Rasta.

Although the shops commercializing ethnobotanical plants have been closed down by authorities, the youth in search for this type of narcotics have re-organized their quests to products having the same effect and which can be bought from pharmacies. Such a so-called "legal drug" is Tantum Rosa, the vaginal granulated solution; pharmacists/ druggists say that this product is more and more requested by the youth.

These new products envisaged by hedonistic use may belong to so-called *Unconventional intoxicants*: pharmaceutical/parapharmaceutical benign remedies, common drugs (*Gripex* – contains paracetamol, dextromethorphan, pseudoephedrine, or *Coldrex* – contains paracetamol, promethazine, dextromethorphan), nutritional supplements, exotic aromas, fertilizers or spices (re-routed from their indications) – smoked, ingested, infused, *bong* (Gorun & Dermengiu, 2010, p. 272).

The police and the prosecutors from the Organized Crime Department have discovered a "route of the ethnobotanical/ spice plants:"<sup>3</sup> the forbidden substances left China as "anticorrosion agents", "polymers", "acrylic acid" or "absorbing polymers" to reach Spain and Scotland, and finally to arrive in a shop from the capital of Romania and from where they were distributed to the spice-shops all over the country.

## 2. Paper Content

The reasons why a young man starts taking drugs are various and multiple. Some are doing it out of curiosity or out of the wish to test a new product, some simply boast on it, some other because they are on the brink of despair.

The worrisome aspect is that once - no matter how it happened - they started to consume drugs or spice there is no return from it. The ones who become spice-addicts out of the wish to feel a new experience are generally the so-called "ready-money" children. The temptation increases

<sup>1</sup> EMCDDA (2009), *Synthetic cannabinoids and 'Spice'*, <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/drug-profiles/synthetic-cannabinoids>, March 12, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> The label mentions: Product obtained from plants and natural extracts from rare plants long-known for their effects. Ingredients: potpourri of dried leaves, extracts from aromatic flowers and exotic fruits. This product is a car perfumed deodorant and is not inflaming; do not ingest, avoid the contact with the skin, do not let it at the reach of the children, sale to under-age persons is forbidden. Source: [www.weed-shop.eu](http://www.weed-shop.eu); [www.piata.ro](http://www.piata.ro).

<sup>3</sup><http://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/actualitate/razie-de-cosmar-pentru-vanzatorii-de-vise-din-capitala-si-galati.html>, author: Pro TV, April 12, 2011

proportionally with the fortune of the parents. On the other hand they believe that spice/ narcotics consumption is a “fashion” they have to submit to. Yet, the drugs/ spice consumption is also spread among those who have less or no money at all. The temptations are right on the way to school: the “dream-creating-shops.”

Because thousands of young people stuffed the hospitals as a consequence of their drugs/spice/ethnobotanical consumption the Government intends to ponder upon the seriousness of the situation and analyze the possibility of changing the legislation so as these spices should be interdicted throughout Romania. Representatives of Ministry of Agriculture, Health, Justice, Administration and Interior, as well as the Anti-drugs Non-Governmental Organization in Romania gathered together in order to discuss about a draft of measures meant to interdict the commercialization and consumption of psychotropic and psychoactive substances on the Romanian territory.

A report issued by the Anti-drug and Human Rights International Centre emphasizes on the aspect regarding the dangerous increase and extension of the spice consumption phenomenon among the young people of Romania - a EU country occupying the fourth place in the top of consumption, after Great Britain, Germany and Holland. The report also underlines that the budget allocated for the programs of preventing drugs consumption - 4.5 million euro - is the lowest in Europe.

The legislation concerning the “dream-creating-shops” has become more restrictive in the latest period of time yet their activity is going on well.

One of the measures was taken last year in an Emergency Ordinance No 6/2010<sup>1</sup> for the modification and completion of Law No 143/2000 on preventing and fighting against trafficking and illicit consumption of narcotics and for completing Law No 339/2005 regarding the juridical regime of the plants, substances and stupefacient and psychotropic products, ordinance that practically suspended the activity of those so-called “dream-creating-shops.”

The Government of Romania has adopted this Emergency Ordinance because of the danger generated by the consumption of certain plants and substances for the public health because of the intoxications they cause and because the risk of abuses. In issuing this draft the Government considered the visible increasing number of individuals who go to hospitals after having consumed such plants and substances and because the number of spice shops commercializing these plants and substances is alarmingly higher. The Ordinance has also taken into account the fact that any delay imposed by the legislative stages to be passed could endanger the health, if not the life of a larger number of individuals - especially young people - as well as the fact that these elements is practically in the zone of the general interest of the public. Under such circumstances it is about an emergent and extraordinary situation whose regulation cannot wait to be solved any more.

27 substances and 9 spice/ethnobotanical plants generating a hallucinogenic effect are considered by the norm to be drugs and can no longer be commercialized as they have negative effects on the human brain, produce serious head aches and panic attacks. All in all the law prohibits 36 ethnobotanical substances. The tables in the Annexes referring to Law No. 143/2000 were completed with the following plants and substances under national control:

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<sup>1</sup> Published in the Official Monitor No 100 of February 2010.

Table I

1. Ibotenic acid
2. *Amanita muscaria* (L:Fr) Lam
3. *Amanita pantherina*
4. Amide of the lysergic acid (LSD)
5. All species in the *Argyreia* (*nervosa*) group
6. BZP (benzylpiperazine)
7. 2,5-Dimethoxy-4-*chloroamphetamine* (DOC) = 1-(4-chlor-2,5- dimethoxy -phenyl) propane-2-amine
8. 2,5-Dimethoxy-4-*iodoamphetamine* (DOI) = 1-(2,5-dimethoxy-4- iodophenyl) -propane-2- amine
9. CPP (chlorophenylpiperazine)
10. CP 47,497 = 2-(3-hydroxycyclohexil)- 5-(2-cycloheximide 2-il) phenol
11. CP 47,497-C6 = 2-(3- hydroxycyclohexil)-5-(2-methylheptane- 2-il) phenol
12. CP 47,497-C8 = 2-(3- hydroxycyclohexil)-5-(2-methylnonan- 2-il) phenol
13. CP 47,497-C9 = 2-(3- hydroxycyclohexil)-5-(2- methylnonan - 2-il) phenol
14. *Fluorometcatinone* (flefedrone) = 1-(fluorophenyl)-2- (methylamine) propane-1-ona
15. *Indanylamphetamine*
16. JWH-018 = Naphthalene -1-il-(1- *pentylindol* -3-il) *methanone*
17. 4 - *methylmethcathinone* (*Mephedrona*) = 1-(4-methylphenyl)-2- *methylaminopropane* -1-ona
18. 4-*metoxi-metcatinona* (metedrone) = 1-(4-metoxiphenyl)-2- (methylamine) propane-1-ona
19. Muscimol
20. *Nymphaea caerulea* Sav.
21. *Turbina corymbosa* (L.) Raf., Sin. *Rivea corymbosa* (L.) Hallier f.
22. All species from the *Psilocybe* genus
24. TFMPP (*Trifluoromethylphenylpiperazine*)
25. beta-keto-MDMA (methylone) = 2-methylamine-1-(3,4- *methylendioxyphenyl*) propane-1-ona
26. beta-keto-MBDB (butylone) = 1-(1,3- *benzodioxol* -5-il)-2- (methylamine) butane-1-ona."

Table II:

1. Ibogaine
2. Ketamine
3. *Mitragyna speciosa* Korth (Kratom)
4. 7- *hydroxi-mitragynine*
5. *Mitragynine*
6. *Salvia divinorum* Epling & Játiva
7. Salvinorin A-F
8. *Tabernanthe iboga* (L.) Nutt."

Table III:

1. Bromo-dragonfly = 1-(8- *Bromo-benzodifuran* -4-il)-2- aminopropane
2. *Gamma butyrolactone* (GBL) = *Dihydrofuran* -2(3H)-ona
3. Nitrite of amyl"

Nevertheless the traders bring newer substances which are not included in the list. Besides, the owners of the "utopian pharmacy"/ "dream-creating-shops" have profited by the fact that no state authority has ever controlled the real composition of such a packet; they resumed their control to whatever was

written on the label. Consequently many of the drugs were re-entered the trade circuit under the name of plant fertilizers or rooms deodorants.

In certain situation the very name of the hallucinogen was kept - as for instance in the Special Gold case - or variants of the same brand have appeared - as in the Special Cox case.<sup>1</sup>

In June 2010 the list of prohibited ethnobotanical drugs was completed, at the proposal of the Ministry of Health, with eight more substances identified by experts as having psychoactive effects. Consequently, Decision No 575 of June 16, 2010<sup>2</sup> passed by the Government of Romania prohibited the following plants and substances which were under the state control:

1. 2C-C=4-chloro-2.5-dimetoxi - *phenethylamine*
2. Ethcathinone =(RS)-2-ethylamine-1-phenyl-propane-1-ona
3. JWH 250=2-(2-metoxiphenyl)-1-(1- *pentylindol* -3-il) *ethanone*
4. JWH-073= naphthalene -1-il-(1- *buthylindol* -3-il) *methanone*
5. *Methylenedioxyprovalerone* (MDPV)
6. *Methylbenzylpiperazine* (MBZP)
7. N,N-dialil-5- *metoxytriptamine* (5-MEO-DALT)
8. Dimetocaine (larocaine)=(3- diethylamine -2.2- *Diethylpropion*)-4-aminobenzoate

The ethnobotanical spices have not disappeared from the consumption market in spite of the Ordinance and of the Decree by which the Government prohibited a lot of 44 plants and hallucinogenic substances; the owners of the “Utopian Pharmacy” continued to commercialize in shops, on-line shops or by announcements newer and newer herbs and substances of this type.

Euphoria and Generation 2012 are but two of the new products of the ethnobotanic range the consumers can buy by announcement and by special sites addressing them. Generation 2012 call them “flower fertilizer.” Those who have already tested them say that it is about a new powder that produces a state similar to that of the shower salts - already prohibited by the Emergency Ordinance. Soon after the Generation 2012 appeared, the announcements of the sites invited to newer and “stronger” powders. Powder Report is one of these sites. The consumers keep in touch with the dealers by means of socialization nets as Facebook and Twitter. On other advertising sites for the medicinal plants there are tens of announcements commercializing the products of Generation 2012, Stone Powder and Magic Powder. Among these announcements there are some that sell bulk Magic Crystal or shower salts; in the case of the last announcement the trader offers original products, with a hologram, quality certificate and invoice. Another announcement, posted by a “unique importer” offers the spice consumers a large range of “legal drugs” among which Chocolate, Afgan Solid Herb, Glow Power 69, Bonzai, Jamaican Gold and Snowblow. In the same category of “fertilizers” the Internet offers products from the branch of ethnobotanic plants: Spice Green, Purple, Stunk and Wild.<sup>3</sup>

In April last the Senate adopted a legislative initiative that prohibits the spices/ ethnobotanical plants. Consequently any type of plants, substances and psychotropic compounds - irrespective of the destination of the substance or aim of the activity - is prohibited, inclusively in medical units or research. The adoption of such a legislative initiative was necessary for a political alarm to be given with the aim to stop the consumption of hallucinogenic substances which causes daily dramas; yet, there was a contradictory opinion according to which the legislative text became futile and created confusion.

<sup>1</sup> The Utopian Pharmacy sell prohibited drugs under inoffensive names Source: Papers.com, September 21, 2010

<sup>2</sup> Published in the Official Monitor No 509 of July, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Source: NewsIn, April 13, 2010.

### 3. Conclusions

In the case of Romania, the phenomenon of spice consumption is so ample that the simple shutting down of the shops will not be a guarantee that the so-called legal drugs stops.

The traders are very inventive and will - for sure - find new means by which to commercialize their spices. The on-line trade of the psychotropic substances shall be among the legislative proposals and, of course, great efforts are necessary to be made as to really stop the on-line trading of such products.

The Ministry of Administration and Interior, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Public Finances, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Sanitary Veterinary Administration, the National Authority for the Protection of the Consumer and the Non-Governmental Organizations shall cooperate and program bilateral or multilateral actions as to fight against this phenomenon. Although it is hard to believe that this phenomenon will be eradicated from the very start, but anyway, it shall be monitored and kept under control.

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