

Internet is growing market for illegal drugs, says EU watchdog

February 11 2016



A portion of 21,262 ecstasy pills seized in a car in the French eastern Haute-Saone department

The Internet is now a growing and varied market place for trading illegal drugs in Europe, the European Union's watchdog agency said on Thursday.

"Almost any kind of illegal [drug](#) can be bought today on the Internet and delivered by mail, with no face-to-face contact between buyer and dealer," said Dimitris Avramopoulos, the European commissioner for migration, home affairs and citizenship.

He called on Europe to "attack the problem head-on" and reduce the online drug supply.

The report, by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), aims to shed light on the world of online drugs market.

More than 80 million people, or nearly a quarter of the EU's adult population, have used [illicit drugs](#), the EMCDDA said.

At present, the vast majority of drugs trade is in the physical rather than the cyber world, but this is changing, it said.

A study in 2015, carried out among 100,000 Internet users globally rather than just in Europe, found that 10 percent said they had bought drugs over the Web.

"Whether in open drug scenes or a dealer's flat, low-level drug sales have historically been associated with real people and real places," said EMCDDA director Alexis Goosdeel.

"While most dealing remains firmly rooted in this physical world, virtual marketplaces are now expanding the boundaries of drug supply, offering wider options to potential buyers.

"This is a worrying development as digital literacy increases, technologies advance and the range of available drugs diversifies."

The agency said that in Europe alone, 650 sites sold so-called new psychoactive substances—substitutes for existing illegal drugs that sometimes had deadly side effects.

Traditional hard drugs such as cocaine and heroine were sold online via the "deep web," via encryption software.

"It seems likely that online drug markets could in the near future disrupt drug dealing in the same way that eBay, Amazon and PayPal have revolutionised the retail experience," Goosdeel said in the report.

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Citation: Internet is growing market for illegal drugs, says EU watchdog (2016, February 11) retrieved 27 April 2024 from

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