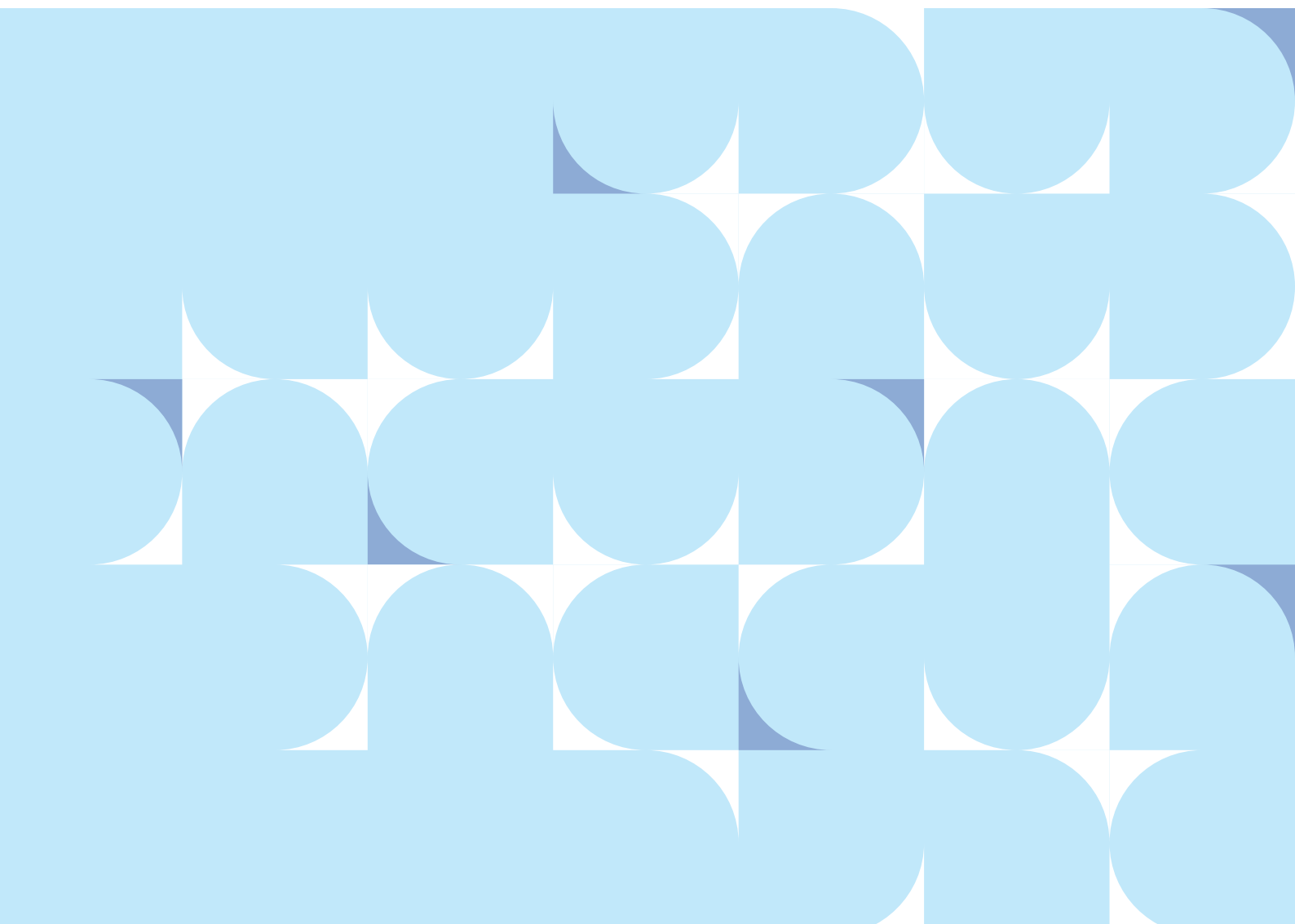


JOINT REPORT

Seaports: monitoring the EU's floodgates for illicit drugs

June 2025





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Executive summary

This report was prepared jointly by the European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA) and the Regional Intelligence Liaison Office Western Europe (RILO-WE) of the World Customs Organization (WCO), in order to support the European Ports Alliance Public Private Partnership (European Ports Alliance). To this end it provides an overview of seizures of drugs in or destined for EU seaports in the period from January 2019 to June 2024. As the report notes, there are significant gaps in the available data, which is a major barrier to developing a better understanding of the current situation and trends. As a result, the report's findings need to be interpreted with a degree of caution.

- Based on data provided by WCO RILO-WE, a total of 1 826 tonnes of drugs were seized at or in transit to EU seaports in the period between January 2019 and June 2024, out of which more than 1 244 tonnes were seized at EU ports (about 68 %). The data available indicates that the majority of the total quantity was seized from container ships (at least 1 507 tonnes, 82.6 % of the total). However, this is likely to be a significant underestimate of all drugs seized in or destined for EU ports during this period, due to the absence of data and gaps in reporting from several EU Member States.
- Eighteen EU countries reported to the WCO on seizures carried out at a total of 96 EU ports (of which 40 are in Spain). However, the data submitted by these countries is not comprehensive, as some countries only reported a limited number of cases. For example, two key Member States only reported two cases each to the WCO during the five-and-a-half-year period in question, while the actual number of seizures in these countries during this time was much higher.
- Among the 33 seaports that belong to the European Ports Alliance, nine appear not to report drug seizures to the WCO. The analysis also indicates that some seaports that are currently not members of the European Ports Alliance are significant targets for maritime drug trafficking.
- Seventeen EU ports seized over 10 tonnes of drugs in this period, with Antwerp (BE) seizing the largest quantity (483 tonnes).
- Cocaine appears to be the drug trafficked in the largest quantity to EU ports, with about 1 487 tonnes seized, representing 81.7 % of the total quantity of drugs in the dataset. Cannabis resin appears to be the second most trafficked drug, with about 260 tonnes seized, or 14.2 % of the total. For some drug types, only small numbers of seizures were reported (e.g. only 35 seizures of herbal cannabis were recorded).



- The ports of Antwerp (BE) and Rotterdam (NL) seized the largest quantities of cocaine (about 443 tonnes and 181 tonnes respectively) and heroin (8.1 tonnes and 5 tonnes respectively).
- The ports of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (ES) and Huelva (ES) seized the largest quantities of cannabis resin (42 tonnes and 30 tonnes respectively).
- The available data indicate that at least 21.7 tonnes of captagon were seized at EU seaports during this period. The majority came from one seizure in Salerno (IT) in 2020 (14.2 tonnes). It is noteworthy that no captagon seizures were reported to the WCO in EU ports after 2020.
- The large quantities of drugs seized on average per shipment — more than 500 kilograms of cocaine and more than 1.3 tonnes of cannabis resin — and in total during the period, confirm that criminal networks are still able to use EU ports to smuggle wholesale amounts of various drugs, especially cocaine. This in turn indicates that EU ports are infiltrated by organised criminal networks to a significant degree, implying the likely corruption among port staff including port workers and law enforcement officials. In addition, violence has been observed in connection with drug smuggling in many EU ports.



Introduction

The purpose of this report, prepared jointly by the EUDA and the Regional Intelligence Liaison Office Western Europe (RILO-WE) of the World Customs Organization (WCO), is to support the actions implemented under the European Ports Alliance Public-Private Partnership (the European Ports Alliance) to fight drug trafficking and organised crime. The EU roadmap to fight drug trafficking and organised crime ⁽¹⁾ sets out concrete and targeted actions in four priority areas, one of which is the establishment of the European Ports Alliance to increase the resilience of ports against criminal infiltration. The aims of the European Ports Alliance ⁽²⁾ are to mobilise the customs community against drugs trafficking, strengthen law enforcement operations in ports, and set up a public-private partnership to help counter drug smuggling.

This report presents an analysis based almost exclusively on a dataset containing reports of more than 3 000 individual seizures made at EU seaports ⁽³⁾ and at other ports of drugs destined for the EU. The dataset covers the period from January 2019 to June 2024, although the data covering January to June 2024 are incomplete (possibly due to time-lags in reporting). These data were obtained through an ad-hoc extraction of the WCO Customs Enforcement Network (CEN) database in August 2024 by RILO-WE. Given the absence of systematic data collection at ports at EU level, the CEN database was identified as the best alternative available for the purpose of providing a robust foundation for the analysis. However, due to significant limitations in the available data, this report can only provide an overview of the minimum estimated seizures of drugs in or destined for EU ports ⁽⁴⁾. In addition, a separate dataset on precursors and essential chemicals used in the production of illicit drugs was also provided by RILO-WE. However, that dataset was limited in size, making it difficult to draw meaningful conclusions or identify trends.

The EU's large number of seaports and extensive coastline pose a serious challenge to combatting drug trafficking, as criminal networks exploit vulnerabilities in ports to evade detection. The EU has more than 1 200 ports, including those located inland and outside mainland Europe (see Figure 1) ⁽⁵⁾. About 300 of these ports can handle maritime shipping

⁽¹⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_4981

⁽²⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_24_344

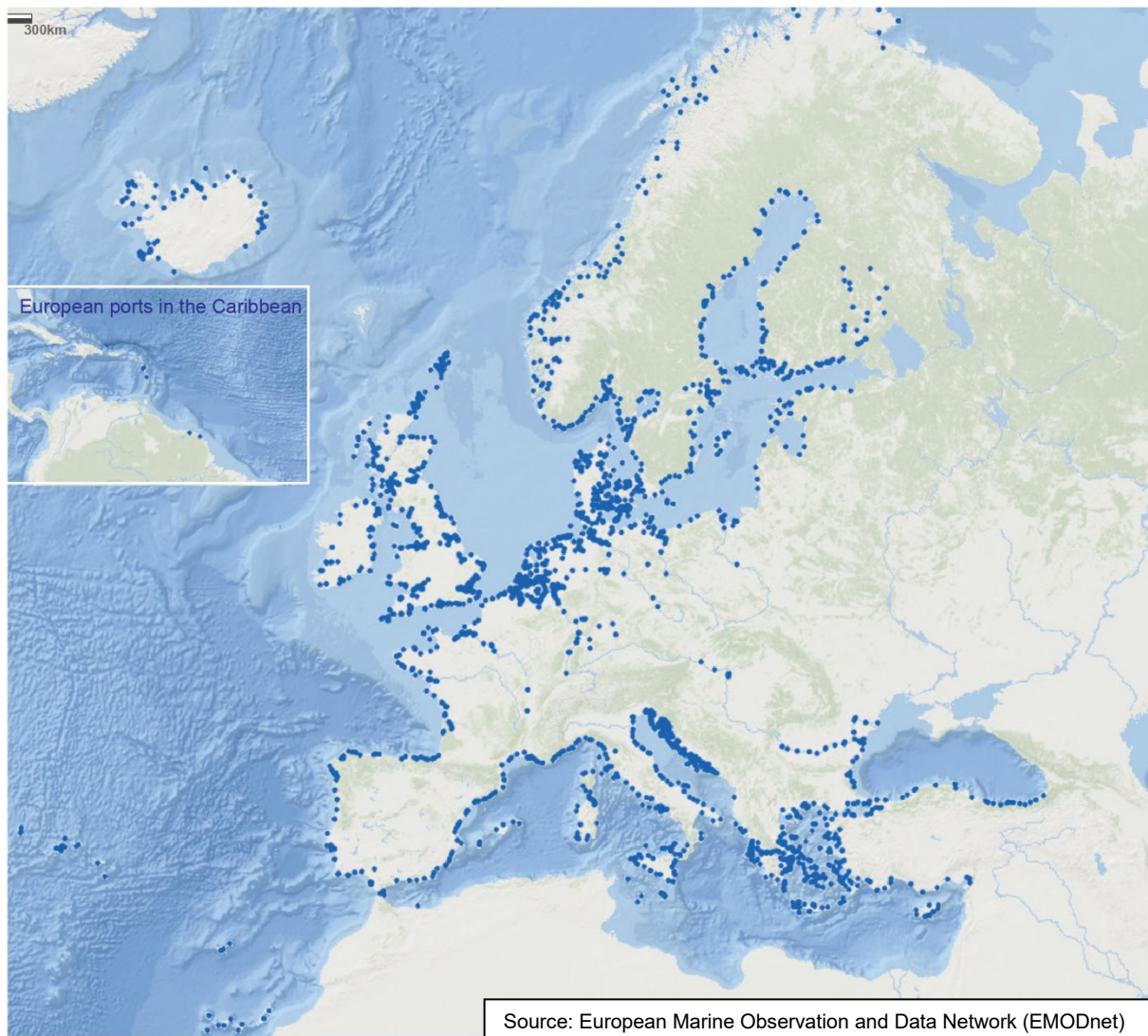
⁽³⁾ Unless otherwise stated, further references to 'ports' in this report refer to seaports specifically.

⁽⁴⁾ An earlier analysis of cocaine seizures in or destined for EU ports can be found in the cocaine module of the EUDA and Europol publication, EU Drug Markets: In-depth analysis: https://www.euda.europa.eu/publications/eu-drug-markets/cocaine/europe-and-global-cocaine-trade_en#section1. In contrast, the analysis presented in this report is not restricted to cocaine but also includes other drugs such as heroin and cannabis.

⁽⁵⁾ Source: https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/atlas/maritime_atlas

containers and roughly 330 ports are part of the Trans European Transport Network (TEN-T) ⁽⁶⁾.

Figure 1: Ports in Europe



As the report shows, a minimum of 1 826 tonnes of drugs were seized in connection with EU seaports in the period from January 2019 to June 2024. More than 1 244 tonnes were seized at EU ports and over 581 tonnes were seized at non-EU locations destined for EU ports. The drug seized in the largest quantity was cocaine, with at least 1 487 tonnes seized at or destined for EU ports during this period (representing about 82 % of the total quantity of drugs seized). Cannabis resin was the second most seized drug (more than 260 tonnes).

⁽⁶⁾ https://www.espo.be/media/ESP-2484_Memorandum_ESPO_LR.pdf. The TEN-T connects maritime and inland ports, railways, inland waterways, short sea shipping routes and roads linking urban nodes and airports and terminals (https://transport.ec.europa.eu/transport-themes/infrastructure-and-investment/trans-european-transport-network-ten-t_en).



The data available also indicate that the majority of all drugs seized came from container ships (at least 1 507 tonnes, representing about 83 % of all drugs seized). (See [Drug seizures and EU ports: facts and figures](#)).

Reducing the flow of drugs through EU seaports requires a collaborative and sustained effort from EU institutions, EU Member States, law enforcement, port authorities and the private sector. The European Ports Alliance presents a valuable platform for such collective action.

Explanatory note on data

The analysis presented in this report is based primarily on drug seizure data provided by WCO RILO-WE for the period January 2019 to June 2024. This data was supplemented by information extracted from additional sources, including EU Drug Markets: In-depth analysis ⁽⁷⁾ and, in limited cases, open-source data.

The WCO dataset underwent cleaning and processing to remove duplications and inconsistencies. The final dataset comprised 3 032 seizures of drug shipments at or destined for EU seaports, totalling approximately 1 826 tonnes of various drugs. Of these, 2 053 seizures (totalling more than 1 244 tonnes) took place at EU seaports. A further 979 seizures (over 581 tonnes) occurred in non-EU locations (primarily non-EU seaports) in shipments reported as destined for EU seaports.

In the WCO dataset, seizures may be reported by weight (kilograms) or number of units (tablets). To ensure comparability, tablet numbers have been converted to weight using an average weight of 250 mg per tablet (170 mg per tablet for captagon). Further, amphetamine seizures reported in tablet form have been re-categorised as captagon, since the illicit drug typically found in analysed captagon tablets is amphetamine.

Limitations

The dataset, shared with the EUDA by the WCO in July 2024, is the only suitable dataset that the EUDA could identify containing a large amount of sufficiently detailed data on drug seizures carried out in ports around the world, including the EU. As far as is known, there are no comprehensive and systematic data collection mechanisms on drug seizures at seaports at EU or international level. However, this dataset has significant limitations and, as such, the findings presented here should be interpreted with caution. The main limitations are listed below.

- The dataset is incomplete. It does not reflect all seizures made at EU seaports during the period January 2019 to June 2024 as the WCO RILO-WE data is based on information reported voluntarily by its Member States. Further, the data is incomplete for the period January 2024 to June 2024, possibly due to time-lags in reporting.

⁽⁷⁾ https://www.euda.europa.eu/publications/eu-drug-markets_en



- Eighteen EU Member States reported information to the WCO, providing data on seizures at a total of 96 EU ports (of which 40 are in Spain). Data for these Member States and ports are not comprehensive, and there are some significant gaps. Therefore, the dataset underestimates the true quantities of drugs seized in or destined for EU ports, thus all figures should be viewed as minimum estimates.
- The WCO dataset includes seizures reported in sea cargos or on vessels at seaports but excludes seizures from 'pedestrians' or 'vehicles' (trucks/coaches/cars) on ferries, as well as drugs recovered from beaches or at sea. While a certain amount of information on means of transport is provided in the dataset, there is missing information on some types of vessels and methods of concealment. This prevents further detailed examination, for instance on modi operandi or types of vessels frequently used, although such analysis would be valuable.
- The dataset on seizures of precursors and essential chemicals was too limited in size to be used for analytical purposes, containing only 15 individual seizures totalling about 52 kilograms. However, it would be invaluable to gather data on seizures of precursors and essential chemicals at EU ports in the future, and potentially also on equipment that can be used in the manufacture of illicit drugs.



Drug seizures and EU ports: facts and figures

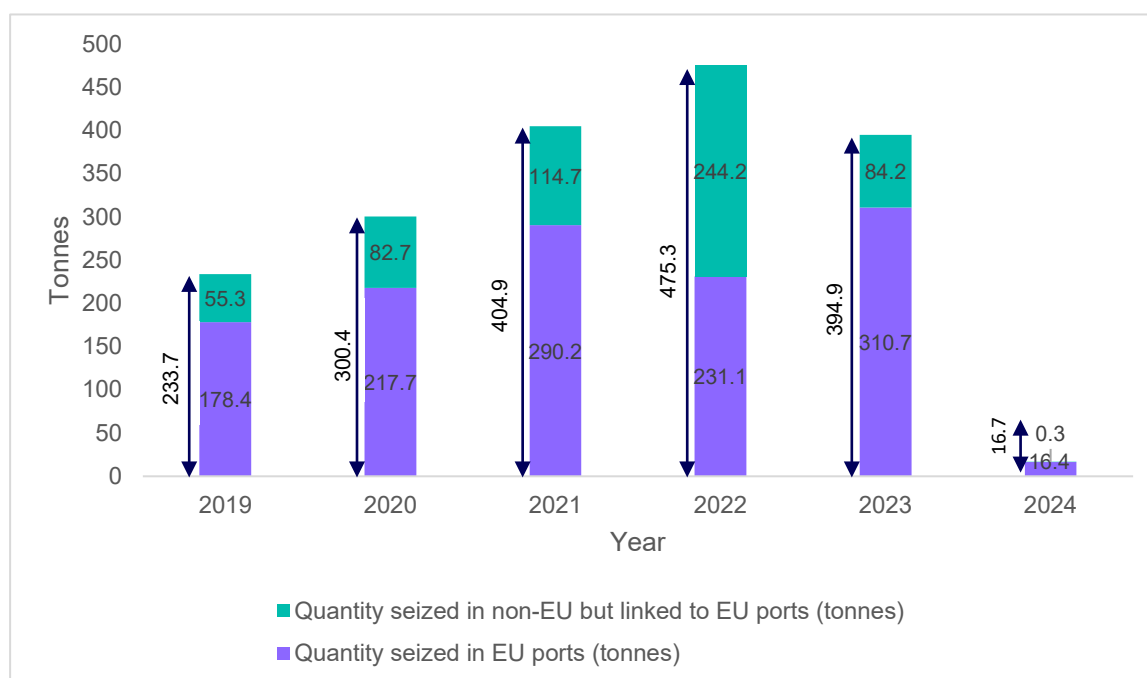
Almost 2 000 tonnes of seized drugs linked to EU seaports

The WCO dataset indicates that at least 1 826 tonnes of drugs (from 3 032 seizures) in or destined for EU ports were seized during the period from January 2019 to June 2024. Out of this total, more than 1 244 tonnes (2 053 seizures) were seized at EU seaports. The remaining 581 tonnes were seized at non-EU locations (across 979 seizures), predominantly non-EU seaports, destined for EU ports. It is not possible to determine how much of the total quantity of drugs seized was intended for the EU consumer market or for transshipment to other destinations.

Based on this data, from 2019 to 2022, there was an increase in the total quantity of drugs reported seized in connection with EU ports (see Figure 2). It should be noted that drug seizures at ports, especially of cocaine, increased between 2019 and 2020 despite the COVID-19 pandemic, confirming earlier observations by the EUDA and Europol ⁽⁸⁾. It is also worth observing that in 2022 more drugs destined for Europe were seized outside the EU than at EU ports. Further, in 2023, a record 310.7 tonnes of drugs were reported seized in EU ports.

⁽⁸⁾ https://www.euda.europa.eu/system/files/media/publications/documents/13097/EU-Drug-Markets_Covid19-impact_final.pdf

Figure 2: Quantity of seized drugs at or destined for EU ports (tonnes) (January 2019 to June 2024)
(^a)



(^a) The data covering the period January 2024 to June 2024 is incomplete, possibly due to time-lags in reporting.

The data indicate that out of the roughly 1 244 tonnes of drugs seized at EU seaports from January 2019 to June 2024, the majority was linked to Belgian seaports (491 tonnes) (see Table 1). This was followed by Spain (388 tonnes), the Netherlands (195 tonnes), Italy (70 tonnes) and Germany (47 tonnes). However, it is important to reiterate that these are minimum estimates since several countries, such as France and Greece, only reported a small number of seizures to the WCO. For example, according to the French Customs, a total of 7.3 tonnes of cocaine was seized at the port of Le Havre in 2022, which was not included in the dataset shared by the WCO (⁹).

Importantly, the data covering the period from January 2024 to June 2024 are incomplete, possibly due to time-lags in reporting. However, based on reporting from other sources it appears that cocaine seizures in the European Union decreased significantly in 2024, particularly in key entry points for this drug such as the ports of Rotterdam (NL) and Antwerp (BE). In Rotterdam, about 26 tonnes of cocaine were seized in 2024, representing a decrease of roughly 42 % compared to 2023 (45 tonnes), while in Antwerp about 44 tonnes of cocaine were seized in 2024, a decrease of roughly 63 % compared to 2023 (121 tonnes). Similarly, in the port of Hamburg (DE), a 54 % drop was observed in the quantity of cocaine seized in 2024 (15 tonnes) compared to 2023 (33 tonnes) (¹⁰). A contributing factor for this may be innovations in the chemical concealment of this drug, making detection more difficult

(⁹) <https://www.douane.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/2023-02/22/bilan-annuel-de-la-douane-2022.pdf>

(¹⁰) Rotterdam Seaport Police (2025), Port Crime Analysis, No. 1, February.



for law enforcement. Another contributing factor may be shifting trafficking routes and modus operandi and the use of alternative and smaller ports.

Table 1: Drug seizures in seaports of EU Member States (January 2019 to June 2024)

Country	Quantity of drugs seized (tonnes)	Seizures (number)
Belgium	491.04	634
Spain	388.30	494
Netherlands	195.07	589
Italy	69.83	147
Germany	46.70	70
Malta	13.18	29
Portugal	11.29	18
Greece	6.49	3
Sweden	5.89	17
Ireland	4.91	23
Romania	4.02	4
Poland	3.56	10
France	1.56	2
Bulgaria	1.10	3
Slovenia	0.93	2
Croatia	0.39	2
Cyprus	0.15	2
Denmark	0.10	4
Total	1 244.51	2 053



Cocaine: the drug trafficked in the largest quantity through EU seaports

According to the available data, cocaine is the drug trafficked in the largest quantity through EU seaports (926 tonnes, 74.4 % of all drugs seized in EU seaports), with cannabis resin a distant second (254 tonnes, 20.4 %).

Figure 3 provides an overview of individual drug types seized at both EU seaports and non-EU locations (destined for EU seaports), while Figure 4 shows individual drug types seized solely at EU seaports.

This confirms the prominence of cocaine as the drug trafficked in the largest quantity to EU seaports (1 487 tonnes, 81.4 %).

Figure 3: The main types of drugs seized at EU and non-EU ports (destined for EU ports) (January 2019 to June 2024)

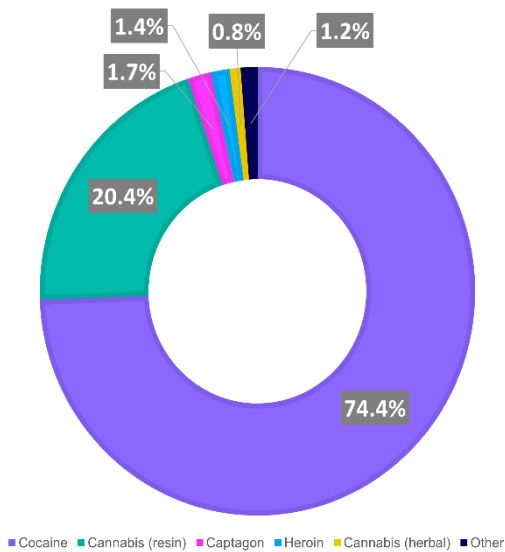
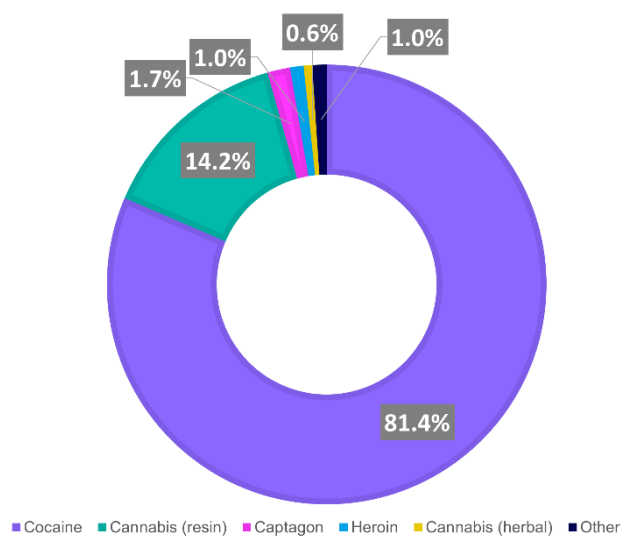


Figure 4: The main types of drugs seized at EU ports (January 2019 to June 2024)



Large-scale maritime shipments of cocaine and cannabis resin to the EU are the norm

The transportation of illicit drugs through seaports typically involves larger quantities compared to other means such as commercial flights, pedestrians, vehicles and parcels. Based on the WCO dataset, the average quantity of cocaine seized at EU seaports for the period under scrutiny was 533 kilograms per seizure (see Table 2). While there was only one reported seizure of cocaine base in EU ports, 16 seizures in non-EU locations (South America) destined for EU ports indicate that cocaine base is also shipped in large quantities (an average of 733 kilograms per seizure) to the EU for further processing (see Table 3). The EUDA has previously noted the relatively recent phenomenon of intermediary cocaine products (e.g. coca paste and cocaine base) appearing to be trafficked in large quantities for processing in Europe, although they are rarely seized at EU ports ⁽¹¹⁾.

Table 2: Average quantity of cocaine products seized in EU seaports (January 2019 to June 2024)

Type of cocaine	Quantity (kilograms)	Seizures	Average quantity per seizure (kilograms)
Cocaine (likely hydrochloride)	925 042	1 736	533
Cocaine base	496	1	496
Cocaine 'solution' (no further details)	302	1	302

Table 3: Average quantity of cocaine products seized in non-EU locations destined for EU ports (January 2019 to June 2024)

Type of cocaine	Quantity (kilograms)	Seizures	Average quantity per seizure (kilograms)
Cocaine (likely hydrochloride)	549 312	909	604
Cocaine base	11 730	16	733

Similarly, the average quantity of cannabis resin seized at EU ports per seizure (1 359 kilograms) indicates very large quantities per shipment of this drug (see Table 4). While there were only nine reported seizures of cannabis resin in non-EU locations (mostly Morocco) destined for EU ports, the average quantity per seizure was also substantial (671.5 kilograms) (see Table 5).

Table 4: Average quantity of cannabis resin seized in EU ports (January 2019 to June 2024)

⁽¹¹⁾ https://www.euda.europa.eu/publications/eu-drug-markets/cocaine/production_en



Drug	Quantity (kilograms)	Seizures	Average quantity per seizure (kilograms)
Cannabis resin	254 136	187	1 359

Table 5: Average quantity of cannabis resin seized in non-EU locations destined for EU ports (January 2019 to June 2024)

Drug	Quantity (kilograms)	Seizures	Average quantity per seizure (kilograms)
Cannabis resin	6 043	9	671.5

In addition, although the number of heroin seizures (46) and quantities of heroin seized (18 tonnes) at and destined for EU ports were lower than those of cocaine and cannabis resin, the average quantity seized (about 391 kilograms) indicates that maritime heroin smuggling to the EU may be increasing, as previously noted by the EUDA ⁽¹²⁾.

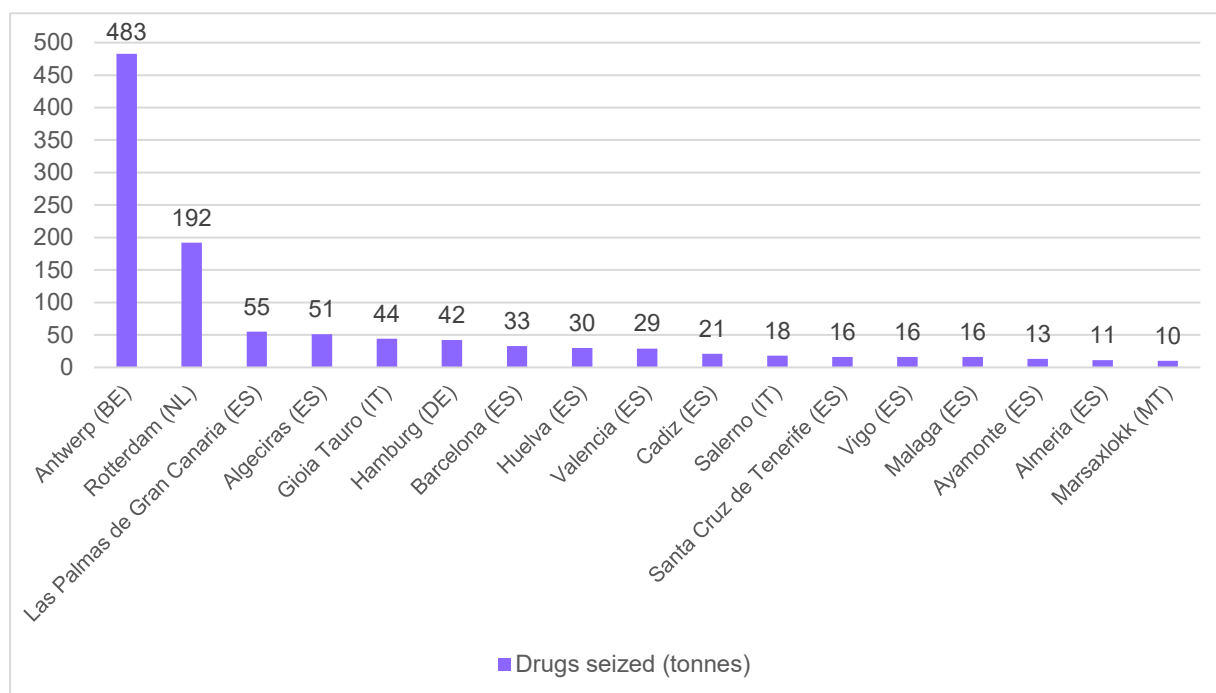
Port of Antwerp: a major gateway for drugs to the EU

According to the data reported to the WCO, Antwerp seized the largest quantity of drugs (483 tonnes), mainly cocaine (roughly 443 tonnes), in the period from January 2019 to June 2024. Sixteen other EU seaports seized more than 10 tonnes of drugs during this period (see Figure 5).

While the available data indicates that some EU seaports, such as Antwerp and Rotterdam, are central hubs for drug trafficking, many other ports, including smaller ones, are also involved. A comprehensive list can be found in Table 17.

⁽¹²⁾ https://www.euda.europa.eu/publications/eu-drug-markets/heroin-and-other-opioids_en

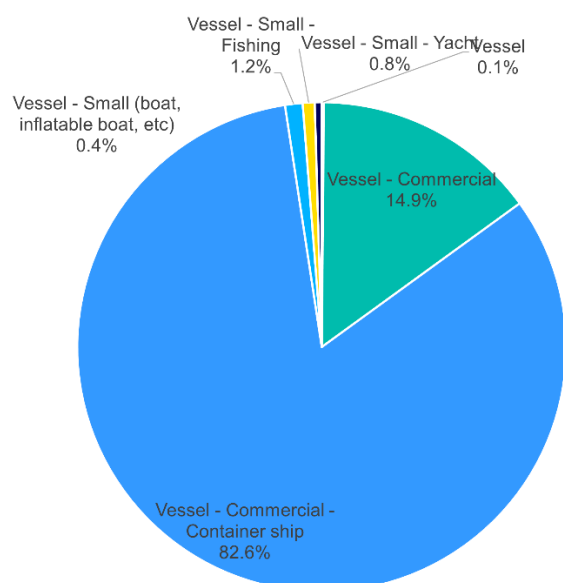
Figure 5: EU seaports that reported seizing a total of more than 10 tonnes of illicit drugs (January 2019 to June 2024)



Transport: commercial vessels and container ships used for all drug types

Based on the available data, which has already been noted to have significant limitations (see Limitations), the majority of drugs trafficked to EU seaports in the period from January 2019 to June 2024 was transported by commercial vessels (see Figure 6). These were mainly container ships, which accounted for 82.6 % of the total quantity of all drugs seized (1 507 tonnes). The second most frequently used category of maritime vessels was also commercial (not further specified), which accounted for 14.9% of seized drugs (roughly 272 tonnes). It is possible that some of these vessels could also have been container ships.

Smaller maritime vessels, such as fishing boats, yachts and other small boats, played a much lesser role in drug trafficking to EU seaports. Fishing boats for example accounted for 1.2 % of the total quantity of seized drugs (21 tonnes), while yachts were responsible for 0.8 % (14 tonnes). Other small vessels, including boats and inflatable boats, accounted for 0.4 % (8 tonnes), while unspecified vessels made up 0.1 % (2.5 tonnes) of the total. With regard to the small vessels, the majority of seizures relate to individual cases of large amounts of cannabis resin intercepted at Spanish ports.

Figure 6: Means of transportation for drug shipments to EU ports

It is important to note that data from other sources suggest that small vessels remain significant vectors for maritime drug trafficking to the EU. For instance, seizure data from the Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre (Narcotics) (MAOC (N)) indicate that substantial quantities of cannabis resin and cocaine intercepted at sea — and potentially intended for EU markets — involve fishing and sailing vessels ⁽¹³⁾.

As far as EU ports are concerned, this analysis stresses the importance of a continued focus on container ships and other commercial vessels, which are probably the primary means of transportation for large quantities of illicit drugs to the EU. Nevertheless, the importance of smaller vessels for drug trafficking to the EU should not be underestimated. In addition, it is worth noting that these conclusions would be more robust if the dataset on which they are based had fewer limitations.

Overview of seizures by drug type in EU ports

The following section provides an overview of key EU ports for the smuggling of cocaine, cannabis resin, herbal cannabis, cannabis oil, heroin and captagon. Tables 6 and 7 provide an overview of the total quantity and number of seizures of different drugs seized at or destined for EU seaports from January 2019 to June 2024.

⁽¹³⁾ <https://maoc.eu/statistics/>. It is important to note that MAOC (N) focuses mostly on ships that are not dedicated to container transportation.

**Table 6:** Quantity and number of seizures of different drugs seized at EU seaports (January 2019 to June 2024)

Type of drug (seized at EU seaports)	Quantity (kilograms)	Number of seizures
Cocaine	925 042	1 736
Cannabis resin	254 136	187
Captagon	21 739	7
Heroin	17 334	42
Herbal cannabis	10 169	32
Cannabis oil	8 162	29
Khat	1 802	1
Tramadol	1 530	1
Lyrica (pregabalin)	1 236	1
Amphetamine	1 234	5
Methamphetamine	897	2
Cocaine base	496	1
Cocaine solution	302	1
MDMA (ecstasy)	300	5
Alprazolam (Xanax, Xanax XR, Ksalol)	83	1
2-bromo-4-chloropropiophenone	24	1
Ketamine	3	1
Total	1 244 489	2 053

Table 7: Quantity and number of seizures of different drugs seized at non-EU locations destined for EU seaports (January 2019 to June 2024)

Type of drug (seized at non-EU locations)	Quantity (kilograms)	Number of seizures
Cocaine	549 312	909
Cocaine base	11 730	16
Captagon	8 659	15
Cannabis resin	6 043	9
MDMA (ecstasy)	1 712	11
Herbal cannabis	1 033	3
Methamphetamine	907	5
Heroin	757	4
N,N-Dimethyltryptamine (DMT)	653	1
Cannabis Seeds	272	2
Lorazepam (Ativan)	186	1
Opium	113	2
Amphetamine	43	1
Total	581 420	979



Cocaine

Antwerp seized the largest quantity of cocaine (442.9 tonnes across 572 seizures) followed by Rotterdam (180.7 tonnes, 554 seizures). From the available data, it appears that cocaine shipments to Antwerp are larger in quantity than those shipped to Rotterdam (average of 0.78 tonnes per seizure in Antwerp compared to 0.33 tonnes in Rotterdam).

Other significant entry points for cocaine to Europe include Gioia Tauro (IT) (43.6 tonnes, 98 seizures) and Hamburg (DE) (41.2 tonnes, 47 seizures). The Spanish ports of Algeciras (34.8 tonnes, 52 seizures), Barcelona (32.7 tonnes, 59 seizures), Valencia (29.4 tonnes, 100 seizures), Vigo (16 tonnes, 12 seizures), Santa Cruz de Tenerife (14 tonnes, 14 seizures), Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (12.4 tonnes, 41 seizures), Cadiz (6.8 tonnes, 5 seizures) and Pontevedra (6 tonnes, 5 seizures) also feature prominently. In addition, the port of Marsaxlokk (MT) seized a notable 6.1 tonnes of cocaine (26 seizures). Table 8 provides an overview of the 12 largest cocaine seizures reported at 12 different EU seaports from January 2019 to June 2024.

Table 8: Top 12 EU seaports by largest single cocaine seizure (January 2019 to June 2024) ^(a)

Location	Year	Departure	Destination	Quantity (kilograms)
Hamburg (DE)	2021	Paraguay	Germany	16 174
Antwerp (BE)	2020	Guyana	No information	11 498
Algeciras (ES)	2023	Ecuador	Spain	9 436
Vigo (ES)	2023	Ecuador	Spain	7 173
Lisbon (PT)	2023	Ecuador	Portugal	4 958
Bruges (BE)	2023	Ecuador	Russia	4 932
Santa Cruz de Tenerife (ES)	2023	No information	Spain	4 560
Rotterdam (NL)	2020	Costa Rica	The Netherlands	4 536
Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (ES)	2023	Colombia	Spain	4 242
Pontevedra (ES)	2020	No information	Spain	3 700
Cadiz (ES)	2019	Suriname	Spain	3 326
Livorno (IT)	2020	No information	No information	3 314

^(a) Rather than ranking the largest seizures by quantity, which would have led to a few specific seaports (e.g. Antwerp) topping the list, a more targeted approach was used. To ensure each seaport was represented only once, the largest individual drug seizure was identified for the first 12 seaports. This approach offers a more diverse picture of large-scale drug trafficking at EU seaports.

Countries in Latin America are the main departure points for cocaine shipments to EU seaports (see Table 9), with Ecuador topping the list (306.4 tonnes, 455 seizures).



Substantial quantities of cocaine were also shipped from the United States (15.8 tonnes, 23 seizures) and Sierra Leone (12.7 tonnes, 3 seizures). It is important to note that the departure country was not always listed in the available data.

Table 9: Departure countries for cocaine shipments to EU seaports (January 2019 to June 2024)

Region	Country	Quantity (kilograms)	Seizures
Latin America	Ecuador	306 423	455
	Brazil	97 257	273
	Colombia	77 696	164
	Costa Rica	52 633	105
	Paraguay	49 207	16
	Panama	43 711	63
	Dominican Republic	24 691	76
	Peru	19 292	102
	Chile	16 759	41
	Suriname	15 185	65
	Guyana	13 635	3
	Uruguay	10 332	4
	Nicaragua	8 156	14
	Mexico	7 396	9
	Guatemala	6 629	20
	Honduras	2 404	16
	Argentina	2 366	9
	Dutch Antilles ^(a)	2 849	24
North America	United States	15 801	23
	Canada	1 691	4
Asia	China	4 150	7
	Türkiye	3 064	3
	Singapore	1 677	3
Africa	Sierra Leone	12 732	3
	Liberia	2 444	1

^(a) The Netherlands Antilles or Dutch Antilles was dissolved in October 2010. However, this designation is still used in the WCO dataset, probably referring to the Dutch Overseas Countries and Territories in the Caribbean region that formed The Netherlands Antilles, which are now individual public entities of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.



Cannabis resin

Spanish ports dominate in terms of the quantities of resin seized but Antwerp also appears to be a significant hub for cannabis resin trafficking (29 tonnes, 11 seizures) (see Table 10). The Spanish ports of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (42 tonnes, 3 seizures) and Huelva (30 tonnes, 11 seizures) top the list of cannabis resin seizures. A large number of other Spanish ports have also reported substantial seizures of cannabis resin (see Table 17). The over-representation of Spanish ports in this list can be explained by Spain's geographical proximity to Morocco, Europe's primary source of cannabis resin. As such, historically, Spain has been the main entry point for Moroccan cannabis resin destined for European consumer markets.

Table 10: Top 12 EU seaports by largest single cannabis resin seizure (January 2019 to June 2024)
(^a)

Location	Year	Departure	Destination	Quantity (kilograms)
Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (ES)	2021	Morocco	Spain	19 876
Antwerp (BE)	2020	Morocco	Belgium	12 177
Huelva (ES)	2021	Morocco	Spain	7 130
San Bartolome de Tirajana (ES)	2023	No information	Spain	6 044
Ayamonte (ES)	2023	Morocco	Spain	5 400
Cartagena (ES)	2020	Morocco	Spain	5 280
Almeria (ES)	2019	Spain	No information	5 271
Algeciras (ES)	2022	Morocco	Spain	4 789
Alicante (ES)	2020	Morocco	Spain	4 380
Marsaxlokk (MT)	2024	Morocco	Libya	4 299
Adra (ES)	2023	Morocco	Spain	4 200
Malaga (ES)	2019	Morocco	Spain	4 019

(^a) Rather than ranking the largest seizures by quantity, which would have led to a few specific seaports topping the list, a more targeted approach was used. To ensure each seaport was represented only once, the largest individual drug seizure was identified for the first 12 seaports. This approach offers a more diverse picture of large-scale drug trafficking at EU seaports.

Morocco, a major cannabis resin producer and the largest supplier of cannabis resin to the European market, is listed as the main departure country of cannabis resin shipments to EU seaports (171 tonnes, 94 seizures) (see Table 11). Interestingly, Spain is listed as the second departure country by quantity seized (15 tonnes, 28 seizures). This is probably due to transshipping from Morocco, although there are also indications that the production of



cannabis resin in Spain has increased in recent years ⁽¹⁴⁾. It is important to note that the departure country was not always listed in the available data.

Table 11: Departure countries for cannabis resin shipments to EU seaports (January 2019 to June 2024)

Region	Country	Quantity (kilograms)	Seizures
Africa	Morocco	171 000	94
	Nigeria	3 000	1
	Kenya	1 900	1
Asia	Pakistan	4 500	2
	Syria	1 500	1
	Lebanon	600	1
Europe	Spain	15 000	28
	The Netherlands	160	3
	Denmark	27	2
Americas	Jamaica	75	1
	Uruguay	5	1

Herbal cannabis and cannabis oil

Due to the low number of herbal cannabis seizures (32 individual seizures) in EU seaports reported to the WCO from January 2019 to June 2024, it is difficult to state with confidence which ports are particularly important hubs for herbal cannabis trafficking in Europe. During this period, the port of Salerno (IT) reported the largest quantity of herbal cannabis seized (2.8 tonnes), although this came from a single seizure (see Table 12). The next largest quantity was seized in Rotterdam (2.3 tonnes, 3 seizures). It should also be noted that nearly 3 tonnes of herbal cannabis shipped from Syria were reported seized in Salerno in 2023, although this seizure was not reflected in the WCO dataset. The cannabis may have been produced in Syria (although the country is not a well-known cannabis producer) or in neighbouring Lebanon, where cannabis has been cultivated on a large scale for decades.

In addition, large quantities of cannabis oil appear to be shipped to the EU, with over 8 tonnes of the drug seized in EU seaports from January 2019 to June 2024 (see Table 6 and Table 12). The largest individual seizure of cannabis oil reported to the WCO was carried out in Murcia (ES) in 2021, departing from Morocco (roughly 4.4 tonnes). Cannabis oil has long been a marginal product on European consumer markets, although the number of

⁽¹⁴⁾ https://www.euda.europa.eu/publications/eu-drug-markets/cannabis/production_en



cannabis oil seizures in Europe (the EU, Norway and Türkiye) increased by more than 200 % between 2015 and 2021, according to data reported to the EUDA ⁽¹⁵⁾. Lately, a wide variety of cannabis products have become available on the illicit cannabis market in the EU, including cannabis oil and hash oil, other high-potency extracts collectively known as 'concentrates' and various edible and vaping products.

Table 12: Top 15 EU seaports by largest single herbal cannabis and cannabis oil seizure (January 2019 to June 2024) ^(a)

Location	Year	Departure	Destination	Type	Quantity (kilograms)
Murcia (ES)	2021	Morocco	Spain	Liquid/oil	4 360
Salerno (IT)	2020	Syria	Italy	Herbal	2 845
Rotterdam (NL) ^(b)	2023	The Netherlands	Canada	Herbal	1 630
Melilla (ES)	2019	Morocco	Spain	Liquid/oil	1 400
Goteborg (SE)	2024	No information	Sweden	Herbal	1 226
Gdansk (PL)	2022	Canada	Poland	Herbal	703
Almeria (ES)	2019	No information	Spain	Liquid/oil	584
Algeciras (ES)	2019	Spain	No information	Liquid/oil	502
Antwerp (BE)	2019	Mexico	The Netherlands	Herbal	502
Hamburg (DE)	2022	United States	Bulgaria	Herbal	463
Bremerhaven (DE)	2024	Canada	France	Herbal	208
Rosslare (IE)	2023	No information	Ireland	Herbal	200
Genova (IT)	2022	Morocco	Italy	Herbal	160
Limassol (CY)	2022	Spain	Cyprus	Herbal	132
Civitavecchia (IT)	2023	Spain	Italy	Herbal	117

^(a) Rather than ranking the largest seizures by quantity, which would have led to a few specific seaports topping the list, a more targeted approach was used. To ensure each seaport was represented only once, the largest individual drug seizure was identified for the first 15 seaports. This approach offers a more diverse picture of large-scale drug trafficking at EU seaports.

^(b) Based on information available to the EUDA, this seizure may have been reported inaccurately to the WCO.

It is difficult to comment with certainty on the main departure countries for herbal cannabis trafficking to EU ports due to the low number of herbal cannabis seizures that included this information (22) (see Table 13). Between January 2019 and June 2024, there were nine seizures of herbal cannabis from Canada and the United States, totalling approximately

⁽¹⁵⁾ https://www.euda.europa.eu/publications/eu-drug-markets/cannabis/retail-markets_en



2.5 tonnes. A major seizure departing from Syria (over 2.8 tonnes) to Salerno was also reported in 2020.

Table 13: Departure countries for herbal cannabis shipments to EU seaports (January 2019 to June 2024)

Region	Country	Quantity (kilograms)	Seizures
North America	Canada	1 328	6
	United States	1 174	3
	Mexico	502	1
Asia	Syria	2 845	1
Europe	The Netherlands	1 709	2
	Spain	390	4
	Greece	22	1
	United Kingdom	1	1
Africa	Morocco	252	3

Heroin

In the period from January 2019 to June 2024, the largest quantity of heroin was seized at the port of Antwerp (8.1 tonnes across 28 seizures). This was followed by Rotterdam with 5.0 tonnes (6 seizures). Other notable hotspots include Constanta (RO), where 1.5 tonnes of heroin were seized (1 seizure). Several other ports of varying size reported heroin seizures in this period (see Table 17). The largest individual heroin seizure took place in Rotterdam in 2022, when roughly 2.6 tonnes of heroin were seized (see Table 14).

Table 14: Top nine EU seaports by largest single heroin seizure (January 2019 to June 2024) ^(a)

Location	Year	Departure	Destination	Quantity (kilograms)
Rotterdam (NL)	2022	Sierra Leone	The Netherlands	2 624
Constanta (RO)	2021	Iran	The Netherlands	1 452
Antwerp (BE)	2023	Georgia	Estonia	1 256
Koper (SI)	2019	Iran	Hungary	730
Hamburg (DE)	2022	Iran	Germany	700
Varna-Zapad (BG)	2021	Iran	Bulgaria	530
Gdynia (PL)	2020	Pakistan	Poland	348
Ploce (HR)	2021	Iraq	Belgium	220
Dublin (IE)	2021	The Netherlands	Ireland	22



(^a) Rather than ranking the largest seizures by quantity, which would have led to a few specific seaports topping the list, a more targeted approach was used. To ensure each seaport was represented only once, the largest individual drug seizure was identified for the first nine seaports. This approach offers a more diverse picture of large-scale drug trafficking at EU seaports.

Countries in Asia were listed as the main departure points for heroin shipments to EU seaports (see Table 15). Their proximity to Afghanistan, the main supplier of heroin to European markets, has led to significant heroin trafficking flows through these countries. The largest quantity of heroin seized and destined for EU ports departed from Iran (6.3 tonnes across 16 seizures).

Table 15: Departure countries for heroin shipments to EU seaports (January 2019 to June 2024)

Region	Country	Quantity (kilograms)	Seizures
Asia	Iran	6 324	16
	Pakistan	2 972	5
	Türkiye (^a)	1 027	3
	United Arab Emirates	2 269	11
	Iraq	220	1
Europe	Georgia	1 257	1
Africa	Sierra Leone	2 624	1

(^a) In the WCO dataset, Türkiye is listed as a country in Asia.

Captagon

The WCO dataset indicates that more than 21.7 tonnes of captagon were seized at EU seaports between January 2019 and June 2024. Salerno represented the largest quantity seized, with approximately 14 tonnes of captagon (84 million tablets) discovered in one incident in June 2020. The port of Piraeus in Greece also reported large captagon seizures (totalling 6.4 tonnes, 33 million tablets), as did the port of Constanta in Romania (1.1 tonnes, 4 million tablets). However, it is important to note that no multi-tonne seizures of captagon were reported at EU seaports after 2020. While the reasons for this are unknown, it may indicate a change in *modi operandi* (e.g. the use of smaller ports for transshipment or trafficking using alternative methods) or the declining importance of Europe in the transshipment of captagon. Since there does not appear to be a significant consumer market for captagon in the EU, captagon seizures in EU ports in 2019 and 2020 were likely intended for onward shipping to the Arabian Peninsula, where there are strong indications of a large consumer market for this drug (see Table 16).

**Table 16:** Significant captagon seizures at EU seaports (January 2019 to June 2024)

Location	Year	Departure	Destination	Quantity (kilograms)	Number of tablets
Salerno (IT)	2020	Syria	Italy	14 000	84 000 000 ^(a)
Piraeus (EL)	2019	No information	No information	5 610	33 000 000
Piraeus (EL)	2019	Syria	Croatia	816	4 800 000
Constanta (RO)	2020	Syria	Romania	684	4 024 250
Constanta (RO)	2020	Syria	Romania	379	2 232 000
Salerno (IT)	2020	Syria	Italy	187	1 000 000 ^(a)
Igoumenitsa (EL)	2019	Bulgaria	Italy	63	370 000

^(a) In the WCO dataset, the number of tablets seized was not always available (as quantity seized was only reported in weight). To identify the number of tablets, open-source reporting was relied on.

List of seaports seizing the largest quantity of drugs by drug type

Table 17 provides an overview of the EU seaports seizing the largest quantity of drugs, by drug type, in the period from January 2019 to June 2024.



Table 17: List of seaports seizing the largest quantity of drugs (in tonnes) by drug type, January 2019 to June 2024

Seaport	Seizures
Cocaine	
Antwerp (BE)	442.9
Rotterdam (NL)	180.7
Gioia Tauro (IT)	43.6
Hamburg (DE)	41.2
Algeciras (ES)	34.8
Barcelona (ES)	32.7
Valencia (ES)	29.4
Vigo (ES)	16
Santa Cruz de Tenerife (ES)	14.5
Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (ES)	12.4
Cadiz (ES)	6.8
Marsaxlokk (MT)	6.1
Pontevedra (ES)	6
Livorno (IT)	5.4
Brugge (Bruges) (BE)	5.1
Lisbon/Lisboa (PT)	5
Bremerhaven (DE)	4.4
Malaga (ES)	3.3
Constanti (ES)	3.1
Vlissingen (NL)	2.9
Sines (PT)	2.8
Cork (IE)	2.5
Gent (Ghent) (BE)	2.5
El Prat de Llobregat (ES)	2.2
A Coruna (ES)	1.9
Gdynia (PL)	1.9
Leixoes (PT)	1.8
Bilbao (ES)	1.2
Arrecife de Lanzarote (ES)	1.2
Herbal cannabis	
Salerno (IT)	2.8
Rotterdam (NL)	2.3
Goteborg (SE)	1.2
Antwerp (BE)	1.2
Gdansk (PL)	0.7
Hamburg (DE)	0.5



Seaport	Seizures
Bremerhaven (DE)	0.3
Rosslare (IE)	0.3
Civitavecchia (IT)	0.2
Genova (IT)	0.2
Limassol (CY)	0.2
Dublin (IE)	0.1
Ayamonte (ES)	0.1
Santurtzi (ES)	0.04
Algeciras (ES)	0.03
Helsingborg (SE)	0.01
Cannabis resin	
Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (ES)	42
Huelva (ES)	30
Antwerp (BE)	29
Algeciras (ES)	15
Cadiz (ES)	14
Ayamonte (ES)	13
Malaga (ES)	13
Almeria (ES)	10
Cartagena (ES)	8
Alicante (ES)	8
Punta Umbria (ES)	6
Adra (ES)	6
San Bartolome de Tirajana (ES)	6
Isla Cristina (ES)	4
Marsaxlokk (MT)	4
Marbella (ES)	4
Rotterdam (NL)	4
Chipiona (ES)	3
San Javier (ES)	3
Tarifa (ES)	3
Granada (ES)	3
Lepe (ES)	3
Puerto de Santa Maria (ES)	2
Motril (ES)	2
Ceuta (ES)	2
Goteborg (SE)	2
El Ejido (ES)	2
Almunecar (ES)	2
Santa Cruz de Tenerife (ES)	2



Seaport	Seizures
Constanta (RO)	2
Heroin	
Antwerp (BE)	8.1
Rotterdam (NL)	5
Constanta (RO)	1.5
Varna-Zapad (BG)	0.9
Koper (SI)	0.9
Hamburg (DE)	0.7
Gdynia (PL)	0.3
Ploce (HR)	0.2
Dublin (IE)	0.002
Captagon	
Salerno (IT)	14.2
Piraeus (EL)	6.4
Constanta (RO)	1.1
Igoumenitsa (EL)	0.1

Conclusions and recommendations

The findings and analysis presented in this technical report cover the period from January 2019 to June 2024. While data was submitted by 18 EU countries, covering 96 EU ports, significant gaps remain that prevent a truly comprehensive understanding of the current situation and trends. As such, all findings should be interpreted with caution.

According to the available data, at least 1 826 tonnes of illicit drugs were seized in or destined for EU seaports during the analysed period. The majority of these seizures took place at EU ports, with container ships comprising the primary source. However, this is likely to significantly underestimate the actual quantity of drugs seized. For instance, some EU Member States only reported a handful of cases and relatively low quantities of drugs seized, although in reality they carried out many more seizures and confiscated much larger amounts.

The analysis reveals that a few EU ports, such as Rotterdam and Antwerp, seize a large proportion of all the drugs detected in Europe, with cocaine being the most seized substance. However, a diverse range of other ports, of varying sizes and shipping capacities, are also impacted and report significant seizures of different drugs. This includes ports that as of May 2025 were not members of the European Ports Alliance.

The large quantities of drugs seized on average per shipment implies a significant degree of penetration by organised criminal networks in EU ports, including the likely corruption of some port staff. Additionally, as highlighted elsewhere ⁽¹⁶⁾, violence related to drug trafficking has frequently been observed in these port environments.

Overall, the findings indicate that EU ports remain a key target for drug trafficking networks seeking to move large quantities of drugs into and out of the European Union. The ultimate objective of this exercise is to develop the capacity to monitor trends in drug trafficking through EU ports so as to inform evidence-based responses at EU level. In order to do so in a comprehensive, timely and robust manner, it is necessary to systematically collect and analyse data on drug seizures in ports. The recommendations listed below stem from this need.

- **Establish a stronger data collection and reporting mechanism:** Making robust data on seizures of drugs, precursors and essential chemicals available to the European Ports Alliance would ideally require the reporting of comprehensive data by

⁽¹⁶⁾ https://www.euda.europa.eu/publications/eu-drug-markets/analysis-key-insights-policy-and-practice_en



all EU Member States, or at least those taking part in the Ports Alliance. Synergies should be sought with the WCO in order to improve current reporting mechanisms and capture all the relevant data, such as the type of substance, quantity, means of transport, method of concealment and the route of the consignment or vessel.

- **Ensure reporting:** It is essential that all seaports belonging to the European Ports Alliance provide comprehensive drug seizure data to the WCO on a regular basis. Of the 33 seaports participating in the European Ports Alliance at the time of the analysis, nine of them appear not to have supplied the WCO with information on drug seizures during the period under study. It is important to understand why these ports did not report any data.
- **Improve monitoring of precursor trafficking through EU seaports:** There was limited information in the WCO dataset on seizures of precursors and essential chemicals in or destined for EU seaports. Encouraging reporting on the seizure of precursors and chemicals used in drug production will be an important component of future standardised reporting mechanisms. In addition, consideration should be given to reporting the seizure of equipment used in the manufacture of drugs, such as tableting machines, etc.
- **Expand participation in the European Ports Alliance:** This report has identified a number of EU seaports that have been the sites of significant drug seizures that are currently not members of the European Ports Alliance, and in the future more ports may be identified. This underpins the relevance of including additional ports in the Ports Alliance, as announced in the ProtectEU Strategy, in an agile and timely manner.
- **Provide training and resources to law enforcement officials, port authorities and other stakeholders in order to improve data collection and reporting:** The EUDA is an active participant in the European Ports Alliance and stands ready to assist in the promotion of good practices.

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