

# Increase in Figures on Drug Offences in the Czech Republic: An Epidemic of Drug Crime or Something Else?

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**Abstract:** After several years of stagnation, the Czech Republic has experienced a sharp rise in numbers of drug offences registered by the police as well as in other statistical indicators related to this type of crime. Between 2009 and 2014, the number of drug offences registered per year by the police increased by 80% and the number of persons convicted of drug offences per year almost doubled. This finding could indicate that there is a period of an enormous spread of drug offences on the streets of the Czech Republic. But the reliance on official crime statistics as the only source of data on crime rate and trends can lead to misleading and oversimplified conclusions. The paper is based on the results of the recent research of the Institute of Criminology and Social Prevention in Prague. Using a qualitative approach and findings from the analysis of statistics on drug offences, the analysis of epidemiological data, the assessment of the new legislation, the analysis of relevant strategic documents and the expert questionnaire survey, the authors present possible explanations for the recent development in drug offences rate, pointing out certain shortcomings of the official statistics of registered offences. The analysis indicates that the real increase in drug crime, connected mainly with the rise in numbers of problem (high-risk) drug users, can in part explain the development of the registered drug crime rate. However, other factors, like the shift in the priorities of the Czech police leaders and related shift in the allocation of capacities, play probably more important role, which confirms the limited usability of registered crime statistics in describing and explaining the real state and development of crime.

**Keywords:** drug offences, crime statistics, crime rate, Penal Code, latent crime

## Introduction

Ascertaining trends and the rate of the drug crime, consisting in a violation of drug laws, is deceptively simple. Unlike other drug-related offences, such as acquisitive offences or offences committed under the influence of drugs, the “primary drug offences” (or “drug law offences”), as a rule, represent specific offences, which are recorded and reported separately in official crime statistics. Therefore, it would seem to be sufficient to examine police or court statistics and acquire the relevant data from them. But what does this data actually reveal? Does it give a true picture of the state and development of drug crime? The purpose of this paper is to show, using the Czech Republic as an example, that reliance on official statistics of registered criminal offences<sup>2</sup> without taking into account the context in which the-

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2 For the purposes of this paper, “registered” criminal offences means offences reported to the police or detected

se statistics arise, can lead to a wholly misleading image of the state and development of the problem. The weakness of official statistical data is that not all crimes are reported to or recorded by the police. This makes recorded crime data a poor guide to the true prevalence of a crime problem. When interpreting these data, it is necessary to bear in mind that accuracy of official data is influenced by several factors (Weatherburn, 2011). For example increase in recorded offences might not mean the increase in real crime but could occur rather as a result of successful campaign aimed to encourage people to report incidents to the police.

Misinterpretation of statistics is often seen in the media, however, experts in the field, and particularly researchers should not resort to similarly superficial work with data - on the contrary, they should patiently explain to the public and politicians that „owls are not what they seem“. The data presented in this paper was collected as part of the study „Prosecution of Drug Offences after the Introduction of the Penal Code“ conducted by the Institute of Criminology and Social Prevention in Prague in 2013-2015.

### **Drug offences in the Czech criminal law**

Drug offences in the Czech Republic are addressed by the provisions of Section 283 - 287 of the new Penal Code No. 40/2009 Coll. (hereinafter „NPC“). These include the following offences:

- “Unlawful Manufacture and other Handling of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and Poisons” (Section 283), mainly addressing the manufacture and distribution of drugs;
- “Possession of Narcotic Drug and Psychotropic Substance and Poison” (Section 284), covering the possession of drugs for personal use (in a “quantity larger than small”);
- “Unlawful Cultivation of Plants Containing Narcotic Drug or Psychotropic Substance” (Section 285), relating to the cultivation of plants containing drugs for personal use (in a “quantity larger than small”);
- “Manufacture and Possession of an Object for the Unlawful Manufacture of Narcotic Drug and Psychotropic Substance and Poison” (Section 286), covering the manufacture and possession of equipment and other articles used to make drugs (including their precursors);
- “Dissemination of Drug Use” (Section 287), consisting of the incitement of others to use drugs.

Inasmuch as this paper will comment on statistical time series over a period of approximately ten years, it should be noted that until the end of 2009 previous legislation, the Penal Act No. 140/1961 Coll. (hereinafter „PA“) applied in the Czech Republic, which was the Czech code of substantive criminal law from 1962. This defined drug offences as the “Unlawful Manufacture and Possession of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and Poisons” under Sections 187, 187A and 188 of the Penal Act, and the “Dissemination of Drug Use” under Section 188A. The new legislation is largely based on preceding legislation, but has also brought some relatively significant changes. Conceptual differences can primarily be seen in the following areas (Zeman, 2009). The new Penal Code:

- lays down different penalties for the illegal possession of drugs for personal use in a quantity larger than small in relation to cannabis drugs on the one hand and other narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances on the other (Section 284 para. 1 and Section 284 para. 2 respectively);
- introduces a new offence consisting in the unauthorised cultivation of plants containing narcotic drug or psychotropic substance (“NDPS“) for personal use in a quantity larger than small, in which it distinguishes between the cultivation of cannabis plants and the cultivation of other plants containing NDPS as for the length of prescribed sentence (Section 285);

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by the police through their own activities, which are recorded in official crime statistics.

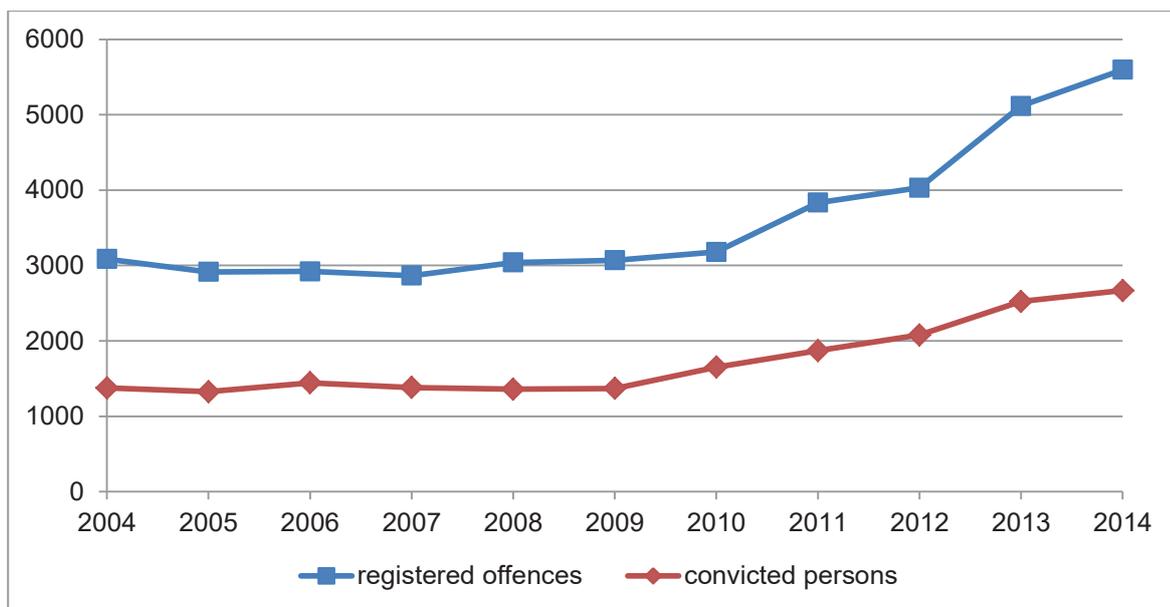
- empowers the government to determine by decree what constitutes a quantity “larger than small” for narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and preparations containing these substances (Section 289). At the same time, the government should also establish by decree what plants and mushrooms are considered plants and mushrooms containing NDPS, and what quantity of them is “larger than small”.

Nevertheless, the scope of activities criminalized as drug offences have remained more or less the same, so it is possible to link current drug offences to drug offences under previous legislation for the purpose of creating time series of statistical data.<sup>3</sup>

### Increase in registered drug crime vs. decline in total registered crime

The number of registered drug offences remained more or less stable in the Czech Republic for 5 years from 2004 (3,086 drug offences in 2004, 3,069 in 2009). The same was true for the number of people convicted of drug offences - 1,376 convicted offenders in 2004 and 1,370 convicted offenders in 2009 (see Graph 1).<sup>4</sup>

**Graph 1. Registered drug offences and offenders convicted of drug offences in the Czech Republic, 2004-2014**



Source: Crime Statistics, Police of the Czech Republic; Crime Statistics, Ministry of Justice of the Czech Republic

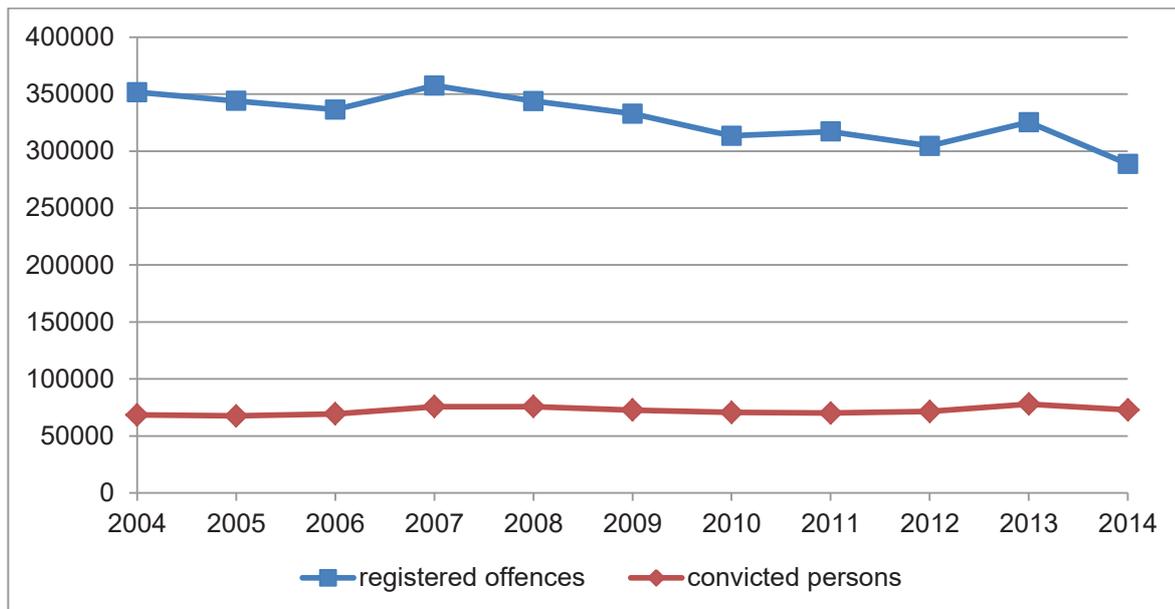
Since 2010, however, the Czech Republic has experienced a sharp rise in all main statistical indicators of drug crime. Between 2009 and 2014, the number of drug offences registered by the police increased by more than 80% from 3,069 to 5,597. The number of offenders convicted of drug offences almost

<sup>3</sup> It is therefore possible to create a continuous time series for five drug offences: manufacture and distribution (Section 283 of NPC + Section 187 of PA), possession for personal use (Section 284 of NPC + Section 187A of PA), cultivation for personal use (Section 285 of NPC - since 2010), manufacture and possession of articles for the manufacture of drugs (Section 286 of NPC + Section 188 of PA), the dissemination of drug use (Section 287 of NPC + Section 188A of PA).

<sup>4</sup> Crime statistics in this paper are compiled from different sources: Crime Statistics Overviews of the Czech Police (retrieved in February 2016 from: <http://www.policie.cz/statistiky-kriminalita.aspx>); Crime Statistics Yearbooks of the Czech Ministry of Justice (retrieved in March 2015 from: <http://cslav.justice.cz/InfoData/statisticke-rocenky.html>; <http://portal.justice.cz/justice2/MS/ms.aspx?j=33&o=23&k=3397&d=47145>); and non-public judicial statistical database CSLAV run by the Czech Ministry of Justice.

doubled over the same period - from 1,370 convicted in 2009 to 2,668 convicted in 2014. The number of people prosecuted for drug-related crime in preliminary proceedings also increased significantly. No judicial region in the Czech Republic was spared the increase in statistical indicators of drug crime (Zeman, Štefunková, & Trávníčková, 2015).<sup>5</sup> In contrast, the total number of registered offences in the Czech Republic has been steadily declining since 2007 (by one-fifth in total, from 357,391 in 2007 to 288,660 in 2014), with one major exception in 2013<sup>6</sup>, and the total number of offenders convicted of a criminal offence remains relatively stable (see Graph 2).

**Graph 2. Registered criminal offences and convicted offenders in the Czech Republic (total), 2004-2014**



Source: Crime Statistics, Police of the Czech Republic; Crime Statistics, Ministry of Justice of the Czech Republic

How can this relatively dramatic development in registered drug crime be explained? All the more when compared to the trend in statistical indicators for total crime, although it should be borne in mind that drug offences make up only a small fraction of total registered crime in the Czech Republic (1-2% in approx. the last 5 years). Do official statistics of drug offences reflect the true state and development of drug crime?

The obvious explanation that offers itself is the impact of the introduction of the new Penal Code, which came into effect on 1 January 2010. There was also a significant increase in statistical indicators of drug crime in 2010. However, on a detailed analysis of the new legislation, it is clear that the changes it brought about could not have had a significant impact on the number of committed or detected drug offences. The types of conduct prosecutable as drug offences remained practically unchanged compared to previous legislation (the new legislation did not constitute a criminalisation or decriminalisation in this respect). The shift occurred rather in penalties for various forms of illegal handling of drugs. Despite the introduction of a new offence under Section 285, this was not an expansion of the scope of drug offences as the conduct to which it relates (i.e. the unauthorized cultivation of plants containing NDPS for personal use in a quantity larger than small) was also a criminal offence under previous legislation, but prosecuted as the unauthorised possession of drugs.

<sup>5</sup> The Czech Republic is divided into eight judicial regions - the Capital City of Prague, Central Bohemia, West Bohemia, North Bohemia, East Bohemia, South Bohemia, North Moravia and South Moravia.

<sup>6</sup> Statistics for 2013 were affected by an extensive amnesty proclaimed by the President of the Czech Republic on 1 January 2013, which resulted in the early release of many offenders who committed new crimes shortly after release (Marešová, Cejp, Holas, Martinková, & Rozum, 2014).

Also, in an expert questionnaire survey, experts on drug crime from the ranks of the police, public prosecutors and judges agreed that the new legislation did not appreciably changed the types of conduct prosecutable as drug offences (Zeman, Štefunková & Trávníčková, 2015).

However, it is possible to point out other factors, whose coincidence can largely explain the sharp rise in figures of registered drug offences. These factors are as follows:

- a high latency of drug offences;
- certain trends on the drug scene;
- an acceleration of criminal proceedings in drug cases;
- a standing of drug crime high on the list of police and government priorities;
- changes in the structure of drug crime.

### Latency of drug offences

In recent years, the police have registered about 4 - 5,500 drug offences in the Czech Republic each year.<sup>7</sup> Is that a lot or a little? Above all, when evaluating the rate of registered drug crime, it is important to take into account the fact that this type of crime is characterised by a very high level of latency. This can be argued despite the fact that there has been no recent study in the Czech Republic that has tried to quantify the latency of drug crime. However, a careful examination of epidemiological data is sufficient.

According to the 2014 Annual Report on the Drug Situation in the Czech Republic (Mravčík et al., 2015), the mean estimate of the number of problem drug users (PDUs) in the Czech Republic in recent years was about 45 thousand people (see Table 1). Given the definition of problem drug users (intensive users of opiates or amphetamines) and the formulation of the elements of drug offences in the Czech Penal Code, it is not possible for such users to procure their drug without an offence being committed - whether by the user (in the case of drug manufacture), or the person who sells (gives) them drugs. Even if all problem drug users in the Czech Republic only procured their drugs once a year, this would be about 9 times the number of drug offences recorded in annual crime statistics. What's more, problem drug users are intensive users who need to procure drugs significantly more often than once a year, and obviously unauthorised handling of drugs other than opiates and amphetamines constitutes also an offence. And finally, people other than problem drug users also commit drug offences. Of course, such calculations are a certain oversimplification, but they clearly indicate the true extent of the problem.

**Table 1. Mean estimate of problematic drug users in the Czech Republic, 2009-2014**

Year	PDUs Total	Opioids Users	Pervitin (MA) Users	Injecting Users
2009	37400	12100	25300	32300
2010	39200	11000	28200	37200
2011	40200	9300	30900	38600
2012	41300	10600	30700	38700
2013	45200	10700	34500	44400
2014	47700	11300	36400	45600

Source: (Mravčík et al., 2015)

It should be noted that the estimated number of PDUs also increased in the monitored period - it increased by 28% between 2009 and 2014. However, this increase does not explain the more than 80% rise in registered drug offences in the same period, or rather doesn't explain it entirely.

<sup>7</sup> The population of the Czech Republic is approx. 10.5 million.

In the expert questionnaire survey (Zeman, Štefunková, & Trávníčková, 2015), respondents were also asked what, in their opinion, the trend in the overall rate of drug crime (i.e. including latent) was in the Czech Republic since 2010 (answered in April 2014). Most respondents from all three professional groups (police officers N=34, public prosecutors N=46, judges N=58) stated that in their opinion, drug crime had increased in this period. This view was shared by 71% of police officers, 66% of public prosecutors, and 48% of judges. The view that the overall rate of drug crime had remained at approximately the same level in this period was shared by 27% of police officers, 23% of public prosecutors and 35% of judges. Interesting, however, is a comparison with a similar expert questionnaire survey, which was conducted in 2006 among similar groups of respondents. Back then, 94% of police officers, 87% of public prosecutors and 70% of judges were convinced there had been an increase in the overall rate of drug crime over the previous five years, i.e. a significantly greater percentage of respondents in all professional groups than in the survey in 2014 (Trávníčková & Zeman, 2008). However, in the period 2001-2006, at which the question was directed, the number of registered drug offences had actually decreased, or remained stable.

### **Trends on the drug scene**

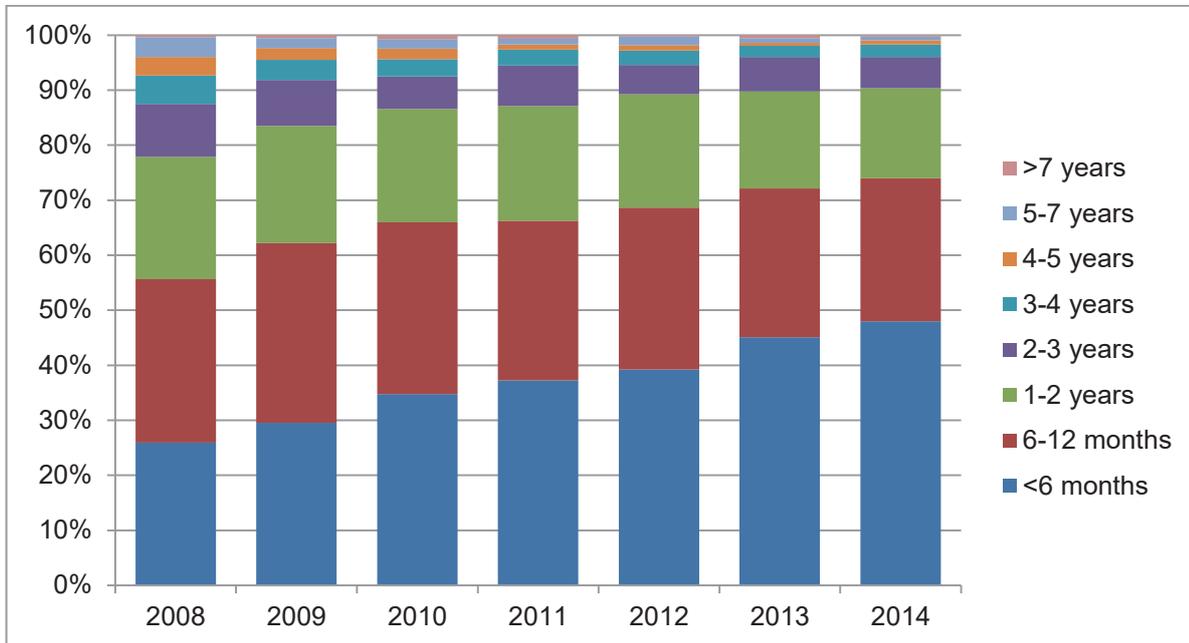
The drug scene may exhibit various trends over time that affect the extent and structure of drug crime. Knowledge of these trends is all the more valuable because it often involves information of a qualitative nature, based largely on findings from the practice of law enforcement authorities, reflecting that part of the drug scene (and drug-related crime) that does not appear in official treatment statistics, crime statistics or statistics on the other interventions. Therefore, it can aptly complement the image of the overall rate of drug crime, including latent crime. Based on an analysis of official reports by relevant law enforcement authorities (Annual Reports of the National Drug Headquarters of the Czech Police, Annual Reports of the Supreme Public Prosecutor's Office, Internal Security Reports by the Ministry of Interior) the following main trends have been identified on the Czech drug scene since 2009 (Zeman, Štefunková & Trávníčková, 2015):

- widespread manufacture of methamphetamine in smaller home („kitchen“) cooking labs;
- increase in large scale manufacture of methamphetamine (pervitin) in an industrial manner by foreign organised criminal groups;
- increase in cross border drug tourism by foreigners in border regions of the Czech Republic, where German (but not exclusively) citizens buy methamphetamine and marijuana;
- import of over-the-counter medicines containing pseudoephedrine from abroad (Poland, Slovakia, Turkey) for the purpose of manufacturing methamphetamine;
- increase in industrial cannabis plant cultivation using “indoor” technologies;
- import of technologies for the illegal „indoor“ cultivation of cannabis plants, mainly from the Netherlands and Great Britain;
- increase in demand for Czech methamphetamine (pervitin, Crystal) and marijuana from abroad, especially Germany;
- availability of preparations for opioid substitution therapy (Subutex, methadone) on the black market;
- emergence of new synthetic drugs and the expansion of illegal drug trafficking on the internet;
- increased trade in pre-precursors (APAAN ...) and auxiliary substances (red phosphorus...);
- intensive involvement of Vietnamese criminal groups in drug trafficking.

### Acceleration of criminal proceedings in drug cases

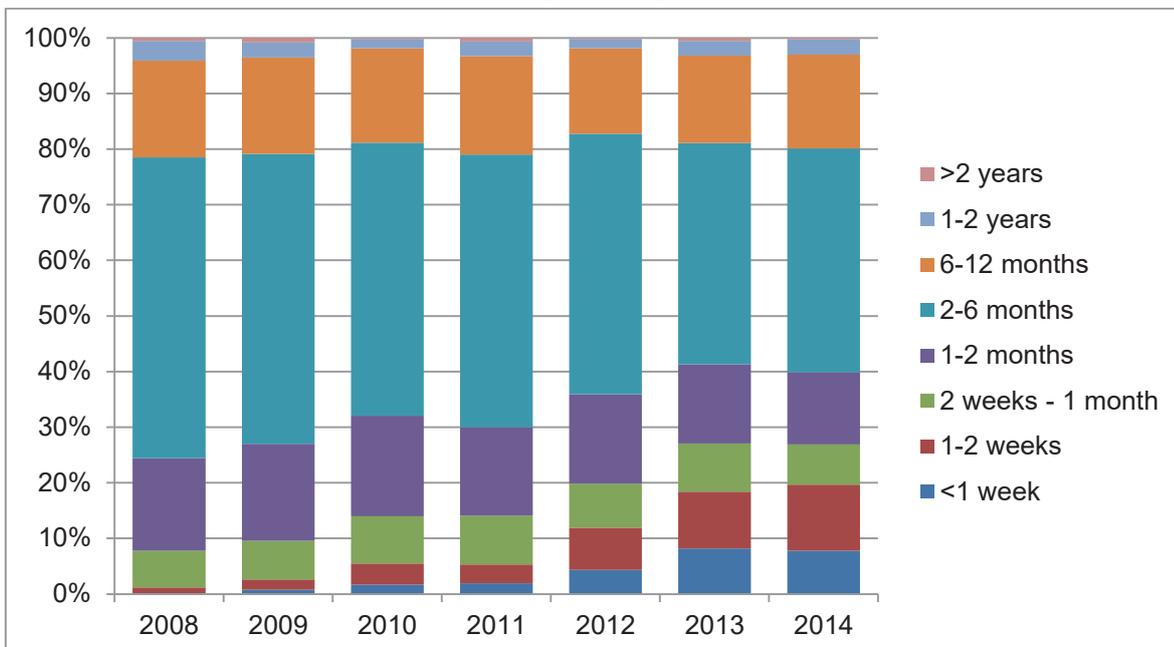
Criminal proceedings dealing with drug offences are generally among those that take longer in the Czech Republic.<sup>8</sup> The average length of criminal proceedings in drug cases is slightly longer than the average length of criminal proceedings overall (Zeman, Štefanková & Trávníčková, 2015).

**Graph 3. Length of criminal proceedings in drug cases in the Czech Republic, 2008-2014**



Source: Crime Statistics, Ministry of Justice of the Czech Republic.

**Graph 4. Length of preliminary proceedings in drug cases in the Czech Republic, 2008-2014**

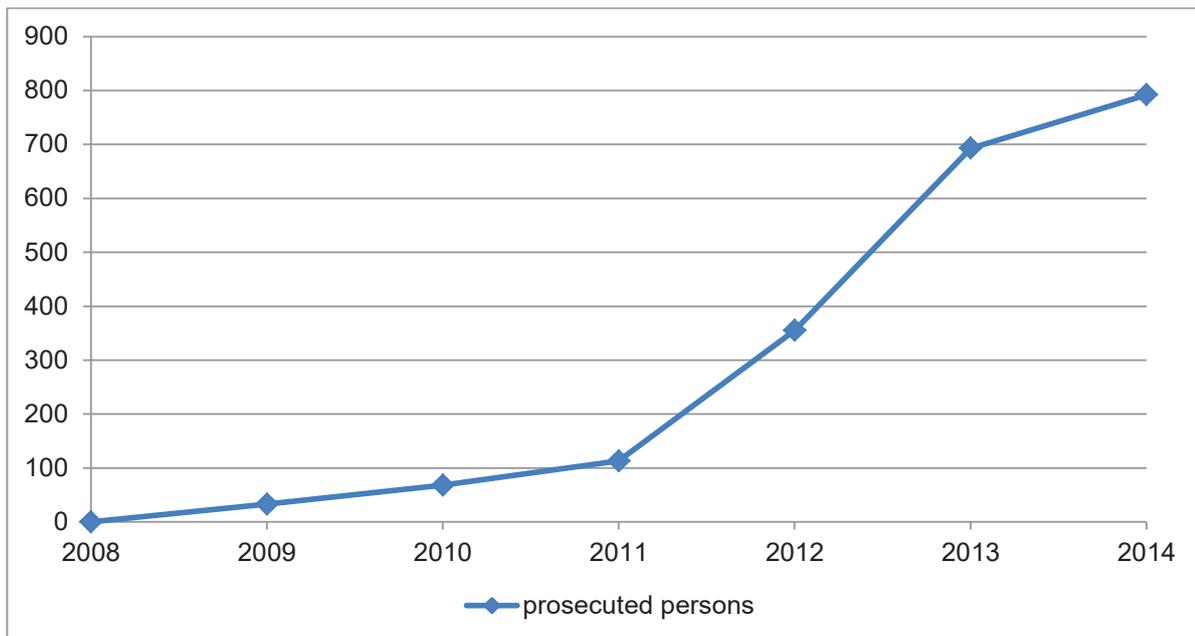


Source: Crime Statistics, Ministry of Justice of the Czech Republic.

<sup>8</sup> „Criminal proceedings” are here understood as the entire procedure from the initiation of criminal proceedings to a final judgment in the criminal case, i.e. preliminary proceedings and proceedings before the court.

Nevertheless, in recent years criminal proceedings in drug cases have accelerated. In particular, the number of criminal cases completed within 6 months from the initiation of criminal prosecution has been increasing (see Graph 3). While 26% of criminal proceedings in drug cases were completed within 6 months in 2008, almost half of all drug cases were completed within this same period in 2014 (48%). The main contribution to this phenomenon was a gradual shortening in the length of preliminary proceedings.<sup>9</sup> In 2008, the proportion of preliminary proceedings completed within 1 month in drug cases was 8%, while in 2014 it had reached 27% (see Graph 4). Since 2012, preliminary proceedings completed within 1 week were no longer an exception.

**Graf 5. Number of drug offenders prosecuted in summary proceedings in the Czech Republic, 2008-2014**



Source: Crime Statistics, Ministry of Justice of the Czech Republic

A significant impact on the acceleration of criminal proceedings in drug cases has been the fact that drug offences are being increasingly processed in so-called summary proceedings.<sup>10</sup> In their original form, effective from 2002, summary proceedings were not suitable for dealing with drug offences and as such were rarely used. Legislative changes in 2009 and 2012 significantly expanded the scope for the use of summary proceedings in drug cases, which is clearly reflected in statistics. While no drug offenders were prosecuted in summary proceedings in 2008, 113 were prosecuted in 2011 and 792 in 2014 (see Graph 5).

### **Drug crime as a priority for police and the government**

In recent years, the prosecution of drug offences has become a high priority for the Presidium of the Czech Police. While previously police leadership placed great emphasis on corruption and serious

<sup>9</sup> Preliminary proceedings (investigation) is the stage of criminal proceedings that precedes court proceedings, which is conducted by the police under the supervision of the public prosecutor, who subsequently represents the prosecution before the court (if the procedure proceeds to the stage before a court).

<sup>10</sup> Summary proceedings were introduced in 2002 as a simplified form of criminal proceedings for simpler criminal cases. Their use by law enforcement authorities has been very popular from the outset, and as a result of legislative changes in 2009 and 2012 which extended the scope of their use, summary proceedings have become the dominant form of criminal proceedings in the Czech Republic since 2010 (circa 2/3 of criminal proceedings in the Czech Republic were in the form of summary proceedings in 2014).

economic crime, extremism, or terrorism, since 2013 the fight against drug crime has explicitly appeared among police priorities. In practice, after many years of personnel stagnation, this was manifested by a significant increase in the number of specialists dealing with the detection of drug offences in the police force (Frydrych, 2013, 2014, 2015). Currently there are 608 police officers specialized in drug offences working in the Czech Police and this number should increase by another 182 by 2020 (Policejní prezidium, 2015).<sup>11</sup> This development contrasts to the situation in previous years, when the 2012 Annual Report of the National Drug Headquarters of the Czech Police states: *“Speaking in the language of numbers, the Czech Police and Customs Administration are currently operating with the same personnel capacities as in 2000, although most measurable parameters of illegal drug trade in the Czech Republic have grown, often many times over.”* (Národní protidrogová centrála SKPV PČR, 2013)

Similarly, a greater emphasis on the detection and prosecution of drug offences can also be seen in the analytical and conceptual materials of the Ministry of Interior, or the government (albeit mainly in relation to organised forms of drug crime). Internal Security Reports explicitly mention drug crime over the past few years as an area seen as a security problem and representing one of the priorities of internal security policy of the Ministry of Interior (see e.g. Ministerstvo vnitra ČR, 2014). In the Security Strategy of the Czech Republic of 2015, organised drug crime is explicitly mentioned as a security threat to the Czech Republic, compared to the previous version of 2011 (Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR, 2015).

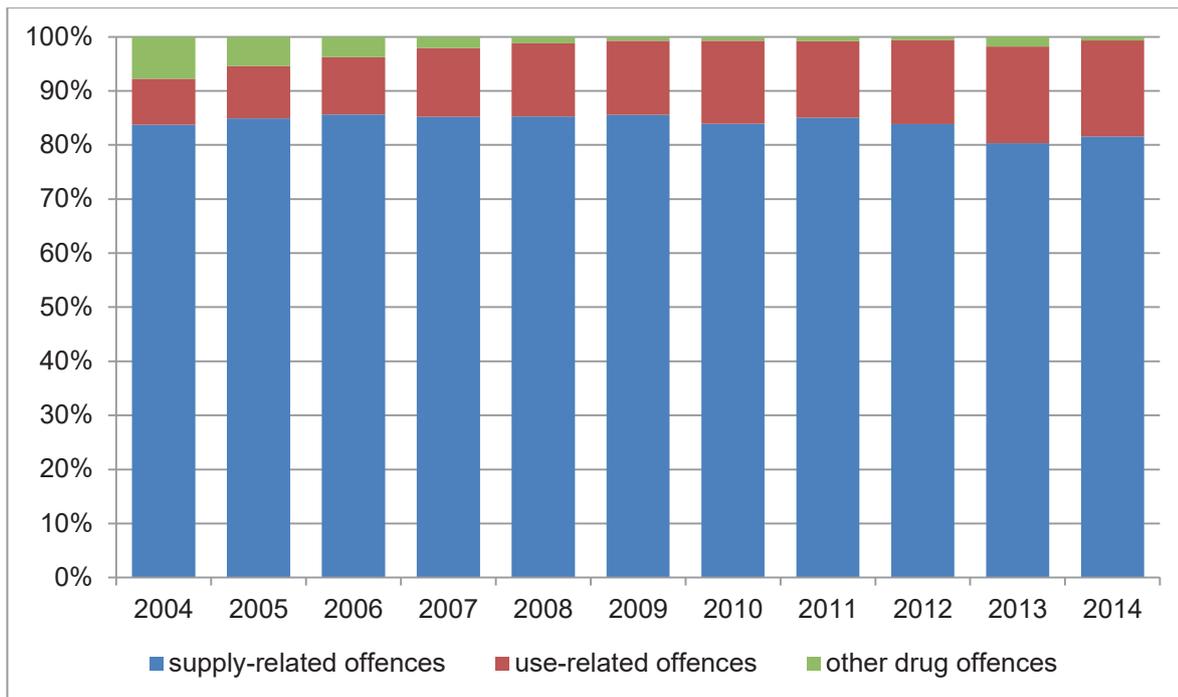
A step up in action against drug crime, particularly the distribution of methamphetamine and marijuana to foreign drug tourists at markets in border regions, is clearly evident from analytical materials. The 2012 Internal Security Report, for example, describes the launch of closer cooperation between Czech and German police and customs authorities in the fight against drug crime around their common borders, joint action by Czech and German police patrols and intensive checks/inspections at markets (Ministerstvo vnitra ČR, 2013). The 2013 Internal Security Report states: *“On the initiative of the Minister of the Interior, a working group to coordinate the joint action of relevant government authorities against drug crime in the border region with Germany was created in February 2013. As of 18 February, the working group launched offensive inspections at public markets in border regions, in which the Czech Police were joined by customs authorities, the Fire Brigade, tax authorities, licensing offices, the Czech Trade Inspectorate, regional health departments, the Czech Agriculture and Food Inspection Authority and environmental departments. (...) Records of inspection activities at public markets took place from 18 February to 31 May. During that time, 3,599 establishments and 10,881 people were inspected. A total of 119 criminal offences were detected and 145 proposals to initiate administrative proceedings submitted. As part of the operation, 3.78 kilograms of marijuana and 895 g of methamphetamine were found. (...) Police forces were deployed to problem areas in the border region on a massive scale.”* (Ministerstvo vnitra ČR, 2014).

### Structure of registered drug offences

In terms of the structure of registered drug offences, the Czech Republic is an exception within (not only) Europe. Of all drug offences registered by the police, at least 80% constitute offences that have been principally consisting of the manufacture and distribution of drugs. The proportion of offences consisting of drug possession or cultivation of drugs for personal use remains below 20% (see Graph 6).

<sup>11</sup> However, comprehensive and exact data on the development of numbers of police officers allocated to the detection and investigation of drug offences cannot be acquired because the police officers in the regional and local police units are often specialized in more types/forms of crime (e.g. drug offences and juvenile crime, drug offences and hate crime etc.) and there is no unified methodology of reporting police forces on the regional/local level according to their specialization (J. Frydrych, Director of National Drug Headquarters of the Czech Police, personal communication, January 18, 2016).

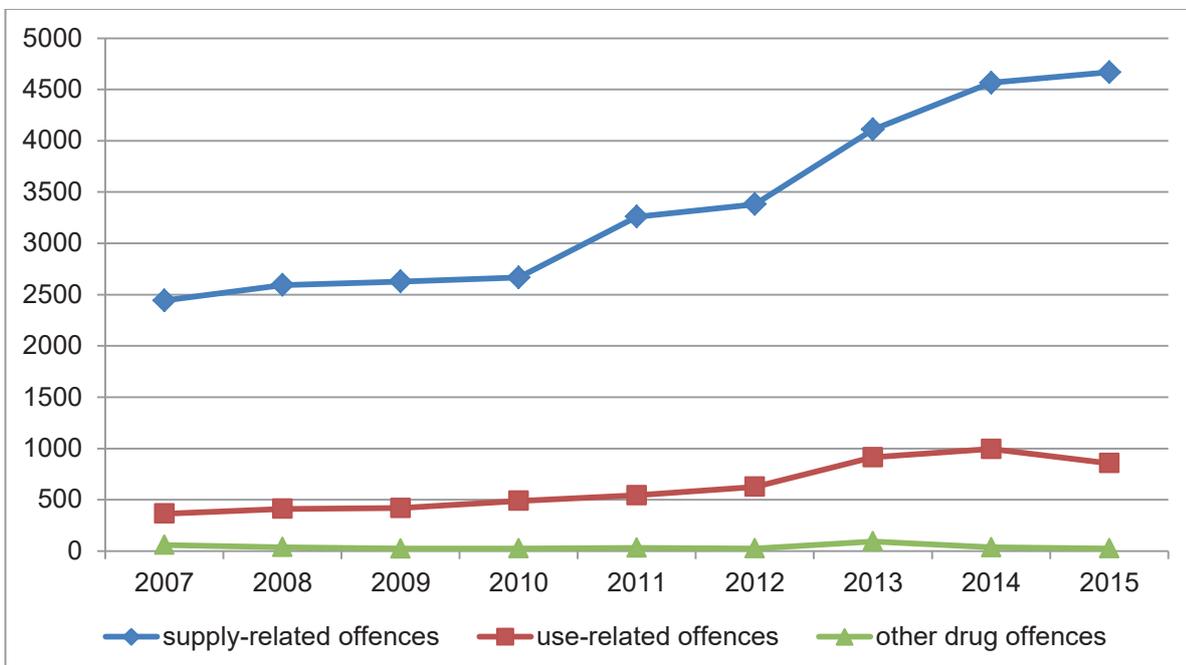
**Graph 6. Structure of registered drug offences by type of offence in the Czech Republic, 2004-2014**



Source: Crime Statistics, Police of the Czech Republic, Crime Statistics, Ministry of Justice of the Czech Republic

Note: Supply-related offences = offences under Section 283 or Section 286 of NPC and Section 187 or Section 188 of PA; use-related offences = offences under Section 284 or Section 285 of NPC and Section 187A of PA; other drug offences = offences under Section 287 of NPC and Section 188A of PA.

**Graph 7. Trend in registered drug offences by type of offence in the Czech Republic, 2007-2014**



Source: Crime Statistics, Police of the Czech Republic; Crime Statistics, Ministry of Justice of the Czech Republic

Note: Supply-related offences = offences under Section 283 or Section 286 of NPC and Section 187 or Section 188 of PA; use-related offences = offences under Section 284 or Section 285 of NPC and Section 187a of PA; other drug offences = offences under Section 287 of NPC and Section 188a of PA.

Such a structure of primary drug offences is quite unique. According to EMCDDA data, use-related offences usually prevail in European countries (EMCDDA, 2015). Over the long-term, a predominance of supply-related offences can, with the exception of the Czech Republic, only be observed in Romania and the Netherlands.

As previously mentioned, in recent years the Czech Republic has experienced a steady increase in registered drug offences. This growth has applied to both supply-related offences and use-related offences, although the rate of growth of these two types of drug offences differed in different years. Overall, a higher rate of growth was observed in the number of use-related offences. Current data for 2015, however, shows that for the first time since 2007, the number of registered drug offences declined, albeit by less than one percent (from 5,597 in 2014 to 5,549 in 2015). In any case, this is an interruption in the trend of significant growth in registered drug crime that has lasted since 2009. Perhaps more interesting than this finding, however, is an examination of how individual drug offences have contributed to this decline. While the number of supply-related offences continued to increase in 2015 (by 2%), the number of use-related offences decreased significantly by 14% (see Graph 7).

## Conclusion

A more complex multivariate statistical analysis was not conducted to assess the potential impact of individual factors on the development (increase) in registered drug offences in the Czech Republic in the period from 2009-2014. The reason for this was largely the lack of input data for certain factors, notably with regard to the capacity of law enforcement authorities, which led to the need to partly rely on „soft“ data. At the same time, however, we do not consider the execution of such an analysis as necessary in this case. The aim of this paper is to highlight the difficulties in which the researcher - criminologist - finds him/herself from time to time, when confronted with the picture of the state and development of crime, as reflected by official statistics of registered crime. This data is most often portrayed in the media and is the basis for action in the field of penal policy. A criminologist with knowledge of the limitations of registered crime statistics, however, should always seek more reliable sources of information. On a momentary absence of self-report studies or victimisation surveys, he/she can at least place crime statistics in the context of developments in other factors that may have an impact on the levels of registered crime.

As explained above, in view of the estimated number of problem drug users in the Czech Republic, it is clear that a significant majority of primary drug offences remain latent, i.e. they do not appear in criminal statistics. At the same time, it also applies that the police almost exclusively learn of this type of crime through their own operative investigations, not reporting from the public, as is the case with property or violent crime. Therefore, it is obvious the number of registered drug offences much more reflects the intensity and focus of police work in the detection of crime (i.e. the amount of capacity allocated to drug crime) than the actual rate of drug crime. In other words, the sea of drug crime is vast and full of fish, and so the size of the catch mainly depends on how many fishermen the police have at their disposal.

In this respect, the Czech Republic has experienced a favourable period for detecting drug crime in recent years. Some of the trends on the drug scene outlined above have created political pressure to combat drug manufacture and distribution, whether from inside the country (e.g. risks associated with large-scale manufacture of methamphetamine) or from abroad (e.g. a complaints by German authorities regarding the importation of drugs from the Czech Republic). As a result, we are seeing increased emphasis placed on combating drug crime by the police and the government. This is reflected in more proactive police activities, including international police cooperation especially in border regions, which are more affected by drug trafficking, as well as increases in personnel and material capacities of the police in this area.

Police focus on the manufacture, sale and export of drugs is also reflected in the structure of

registered drug offences, where we have seen a halt or interruption in the increase of registered use-related offences, while the number of registered supply-related offences to rise.

At the same time, legislative changes have created more scope for faster processing of a substantial proportion of drug offences, which quickly releases police capacities for the detection and prosecution of new cases.

In light of the above facts, it is possible - despite the absence of more accurate data from criminological studies - to conclude that although the Czech Republic has probably experienced an increase in the number of primary drug offences in recent years, it is not nearly to the extent indicated by statistics of registered drug offences.

**PETR ZEMAN** vystudoval Právnickou fakultu UK v Praze. Je pracovníkem Institutu pro kriminologii a sociální prevenci, kde od roku 2012 působí jako vedoucí výzkumné skupiny. Zabývá se především kriminologickým výzkumem v oblastech trestné činnosti související drogami, zacházení s nebezpečnými pachatelí, trestního řízení a systémů trestní justice.

**MICHAELA ŠTEFUNKOVÁ** je absolventkou Právnické fakulty Univerzity Komenského v Bratislavě. V současné době působí jako výzkumná pracovníce v Institutu pro kriminologii a sociální prevenci. Ve výzkumné a publikační činnosti se zaměřuje zejména na problematiku drogové kriminality a související adiktologická témata, a na oblast viktimologie.

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