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Lisbon - Drug traffickers are using increasingly sophisticated techniques to smuggle cocaine to Europe, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) said in a study revealed Thursday in Lisbon.

Innovative techniques include incorporating cocaine base into materials such as beeswax, plastic or clothing, according to the EMCDDA, which is a European Union agency.

The drug is then extracted in special laboratories, about 40 of which were discovered in the EU in 2008.

The laboratories are different from those found in cocaine-producing South American countries, which manufacture cocaine base from coca leaves or coca paste.

Cocaine use has increased markedly in Europe since the mid-1990s, according to EMCDDA.

Cocaine is now the second most popular illicit substance in Europe after cannabis, with about 2 per cent of young adults estimated to have used it in 2008.

Countries including Spain, the Netherlands and Britain have long had cocaine users, while France, Italy and Portugal have seen a rapid increase in cocaine use in the recent years.

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