

<http://www.europolitics.info/social/cocaine-market-buoyant-art270440-26.html>



## **Cocaine market buoyant**

By Nathalie Vandystadt | Thursday 29 April 2010

The EU's cocaine market is sailing smoothly through the crisis and dealers are increasingly clever in their techniques to get their product to market. The traditional process of extracting cocaine base from coca leaves is concentrated in Colombia, but Europe is specialised in second-hand production. The technique is discrete: cocaine base or hydrochloride (the white powder) is incorporated into various materials imported into the European Union: beeswax, plastic, fertiliser or clothing. Secondary extraction laboratories then recombine the drug in the EU.

Some 40 such labs were dismantled in the Union in 2008, according to a joint report by the **European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction** and Europol, published on 29 April. They flourished in Spain, the main gateway to Europe for cocaine, and others were reported in the Netherlands, France and Greece.

Cocaine consumption has been on the rise in Europe for 20 years, coming just after cannabis. Thirteen million Europeans, ie 3.9% of the 15-64 age group, have tried it. Although cocaine had until recently been limited to certain markets – Spain, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, then France, Portugal and Italy – it is now conquering Central and Eastern Europe. With 77 tonnes seized in 2007, Europe is the third largest consumer, after Latin America and the United States.