



Crimes related to new psychoactive substances in rural segregates of Miskolc in Hungary

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Abstract

Aim: The article examines the relationship between new psychoactive drugs and segregation in one city (Miskolc), showing the mechanism of its effects. The study indicates that deprived social milieu, poverty, and hopelessness are excellent breeding grounds for this new form of drug crime by structuring drug crime into a crime involving new psychoactive substances (NPS), affordable for the poorer classes, and classic drugs.

Methodology: Given the purpose of the research, the study was based primarily on literature and historical data, a review of legal sources, and an analysis of police headquarters case statistics and CSO data. The regulatory efforts of urban decision-makers to address the problem have also been analyzed. With regard to the purpose of the research, the study was based primarily on literature and historical data, a review of legal sources, and analysis of police headquarters case statistics and CSO data. The regulatory efforts made by city policymakers to address the problem were also analyzed.

Findings: New psychoactive drugs target slums, thus structuring the drug market. The poor have easy access to NPS, while the wealthier classes turn to classic drugs (cocaine, MDMA, etc.). The presence of NPS in a given area alters the crime trend and perpetuates underdevelopment. In the long term, it slows down improvement. Law enforcement and judicial instruments are not sufficient to address and reduce it. In addition, the law threatens to lower penalties for dealing in NPS so that even the risk premium is not built into the price of such substances, ensuring easy access for the impoverished. Meanwhile, such chemicals' health and social dangers are at least if not higher than those of traditional drugs.

Value: The results may be helpful for city policymakers, crime prevention

professionals, and police management. The study has the potential to inform the broader scientific community about the complex dangers of NPS. The study can be an essential starting point for further research into new phenomena of drug crime and the extent of health and social harm associated with new psychoactive substances. As well as to develop new methods and criminological recommendations for law enforcement.

Keywords: segregate, rural crime, psychoactive drugs, police, criminal geography

Introduction

The North-Eastern region of Hungary, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County, Miskolc has been undergoing significant economic and cultural change since the 1990s, and there are parts of the city (mainly Miskolc - Lyukóvölgy, Tetemvár) that have become disconnected from the rest of the town and have started to move downhill. Unemployment, poverty, multiple deprivations, and exclusion all create and result in the spatialization of crime (Jansen, 1991).¹ The question is how to stop the destabilizing balance and crisis of the city, of the society. In addition, this region is heavily over-represented in terms of population by the Roma minority, thus adding to the crime a marked tension between the majority society and the Roma community that has been present for decades, further exacerbating the racist exclusionary voices within the country.²

The question arises as to the path that led to the emergence of this particular subculture and, through it, to the increased crime. Fundamentally, economics and deprivation are closely and inextricably linked to the criminality of people and, in particular, relatively new criminality to the phenomenon of the proliferation of psychoactive substance³ use (Szécsi & Sik, 2016), which narcotic substances can now be called the 'heroin' of slums. Since the emergence of the so-called new psychoactive substances, which have eclipsed traditional drugs and are gaining ground, the inhabitants of economically deprived segregated areas have gained more accessible access to the new psychoactive substances

1 In the United States, research by the Chicago School has found that crime is a consequence of poor housing, poverty and social disorder.

2 Poverty for Gypsies in Hungary is also associated with ethnic tensions, is not independent of means-tested policies at the local level, and deepens conflicts in local societies.

3 New psychoactive substances are defined as '*new narcotics, or psychotropic drugs, in pure form or in preparations, which are not controlled under the United Nations drug conventions but which may pose a threat to public health to the same extent as the substances listed in the conventions.*'

and these are preferred to be sold to young people (Lannert, 2017). The main problem is that New Psychoactive Substances (furthermore: NPS), with their new formulations, often containing unknown compounds, are much cheaper than drugs

Therefore, it is becoming available and popping up in circles where before, sellers of this type of product could not find potential consumers. Mind-altering drugs, taking a new form and changing their name, have targeted isolated, so-called slums in large cities (e.g., Miskolc) to expand, as the sale of the drug represents a significant source of income compared to the low living conditions in these areas. Thus, the consumption and sale of NPS have become the most common crime in slums in Hungary, a moderately developed EU country. It is a significant health and social threat (URL1). Hungary has lost its favorable position compared to other European countries (National Anti-Drug Strategy 2013-2020).

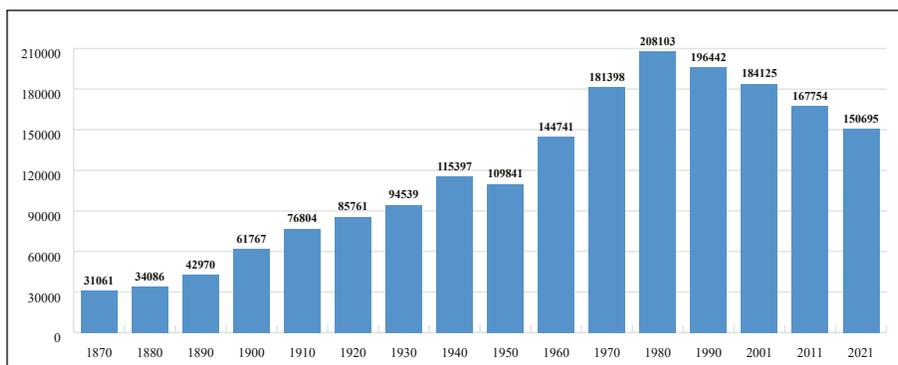
The intensification of online drug trafficking further exacerbated the situation in 2020-2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Mezei, 2019). This is because detecting and proving crimes committed in this way is becoming increasingly complex and costly (Ritter, 2016). Therefore, it is futile to threaten increased penalties if the chances of being caught are low, the latter being criminologically more important (Grogger, 1991). In comparison, slum dwellers are used to psychoactive drugs and can obtain a 'daily dose' at the cost of minor property crimes, only to walk the streets like living zombies for a few hours afterward (URL2). In doing so, they cause consternation and, having become accustomed to it, indifference and insensitivity among citizens of good conscience. The police and local politics are also helpless; the increasing number of criminal actions and police pressure, the growing police presence has not been able to reduce this criminal phenomenon in any meaningful way, at most, it has succeeded in shifting it to other places periodically and locally (URL3).

In my study, I try to point out that NPS is typically concentrated in slums and ghettos, where policing and legal instruments do not help solve a particular area's crisis.

About Miskolc

Today, Miskolc is one of the most disadvantaged regions of Hungary. On almost all indicators, the situation is worse than the national average, and the gap with Europe is enormous. The facts and trends are worrying, but the city's assets, past, and existing values would allow for renewal.

Figure 1. *The population development of Miskolc*



Source: Office of Central Statistical (KSH, 2020) census data.

After the Second World War, the industrial development policy set the city on a completely new and different path: it became a symbol of the manufacturing industry. Newly built housing estates absorbed tens of thousands of new arrivals while the destruction of the historic city center began. By the end of the 1950s, Miskolc's population had multiplied, heavy industry and metallurgy seemed to be flourishing, with much of the active population linked to this activity, and university training was started in 1949 to provide a technical supply of production. By the 1980s, it was clear that the one-sided industrial development was taking its revenge due to the divorce that was then taking shape. After the change of regime, the collapse of the heavy industry led to thousands of people losing their jobs and becoming unemployed overnight, families in crisis in terms of income and social situation, and an increase in the prevalence of deviant behavior, especially alcoholism and mental illness.

Miskolc is now the fourth most populous city in the country and has experienced similar trends in population change to those? (the other cities?) in the country, but more markedly. From a peak population of 211,660 in 1986, the city's population fell to 154,521 in 2019, meaning that in 30 years, the city has lost almost more than 25% of its population (Mihályi, 2020).

A similar trend is highlighted by, among others, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which states that one of the long-term challenges of the 21st century is demographics. While overpopulation is a global problem, post-industrial societies - particularly in Europe - are experiencing another phenomenon: aging and depopulation, leading to a decline in the proportion of the working-age population and ultimately reducing competitiveness,

one of the European Union's key objectives. Since the regime change in 1989, Miskolc has had a negative migration balance, in contrast to the previous thirty years, i.e., a loss of migration year after year. The main reason for emigration within Europe is the significant difference in wages, and thus also internal migration (Haraszti, 2018). In many cases, people who lost their jobs started to migrate with their families or alone to smaller settlements in the county, or the capital, or Western Hungary for better economic opportunities.

The Miskolc region can be considered a disadvantaged district and falls entirely within the scope of the beneficiary municipalities and communities of Government Decree 105/2015 (23.IV.) and 106/2015 (23.IV.). The classification is based on a complex indicator, which is developed based on the characteristics of four groups of hands: (1) social and demographic characteristics; (2) housing and living conditions; (3) local economy and labor market situation; (4) infrastructure and environmental conditions. This is important because beneficiary municipalities and districts have an advantage in accessing development aid. The segregation of urban areas determines the disadvantaged situation. Segregation is where different social strata, ethnic groups, etc., within a municipality, are highly segregated. Segregation is associated with substantial inequalities in income and municipal infrastructure (Andorka 2006 [1997]). A segregation area is a physically contiguous part of a settlement, consisting of at least one block of land between four streets or public areas. At least 50 percent of the working-age population living there has no income from work and no more than eight years of secondary education (Census 2011, cited in Varró & Kadét, 2010). According to the KSH (Office of Central Statistical) definition, 13 segregations were identified in Miskolc during the 2011 Census, of which two (Lyukóbánya and Lyukóvölgy) were located on the outskirts of the city (URL4). The Anti-Segregation Programme expands the definition and includes areas where people receive regular social assistance is twice the municipal average (Varró & Kadét, 2010). In Miskolc, segregation is now concentrated in suburbanized areas. They surround the central settlement like a ring. Administratively, they belong to the main settlement and the police station and are located within 10-15 km from the 'mother settlement' (Mátyás, 2020). The eradication of Miskolc's slums is ongoing (Integrated Settlement Development Strategy 2014), resulting in an increasing shift of deep poverty and the drug problem from inner-city slums to suburban suburbanized areas.

Miskolc before and after the regime change

The bankruptcy of state socialism in 1990 affected the whole country. Of all the major cities in Hungary, Miskolc suffered the most. The city had to face economic restructuring and social and political regime change at the same time. Before the regime change, the city had four major industries. These were spinning, mining, cement, steel, and machinery. Iron production and other consumers in Miskolc were served primarily by the Lyukóhány coal mine. This made it one of the largest underground coal mines in the country in 1978. Still, in 2004, the mining was finally closed down following the liquidation procedure (Moldova, 2009). In 1914, the first lime works were established in Hejőcsaba - now a part of the city of Miskolc - which initially employed 110-120 workers. In 1960, a new factory was built, using a total of 1200 people. Due to restructuring, fall in demand for cement, and environmental changes, the old factory was demolished, and the site was built on grass. Today, the successor, Holcim Hungária Co. employs 170 people. The long history of steel production in Diósgyőr dates back to 1770. Before the regime change, the factory needed tens of thousands of people in Lenin Metallurgical Works. In essence, the city became a center of the iron industry under socialism. In 2009, its successor, DAM 2004 Ltd., ceased its activities in 2009, and the Diósgyőr steelworks ceased to exist. Perhaps the driving force of the region was the machinery industry. It became independent in 1948 under the name DIMÁVAG Machine Factory. In 1963, the Diósgyőr Machine Works (DIGÉP) merged several divisions and became one of the centers of machine manufacturing in Hungary. Until the end of the 1980s, the main products of the factory were cable machines, machine tools, and railway bicycles, in addition to military products ([URL5](#)). During this period, some 10,000 people worked there. In 1999, liquidation proceedings were opened against DIGÉP, but it still employed 5 300 workers even then. In 1990, liquidation proceedings were opened, and 44.8 hectares of the factory were sold. A total of 2000-2500 people are now employed by the companies that have relocated here. After the fall of communism, the economic downturn hit the industrial towns of Northern Hungary the hardest, with one of the highest unemployment rates in the country and a drastic decrease in the population of Miskolc. The privatization of Lenin Metallurgical Works and DIGÉP and its various adverse consequences caused severe disadvantages for the people living here (Lóránt, 2017).

The emergence and regulation of the NPS

The year 2010 marked a turning point in the domestic and international drug market. In 2009, mephedrone was introduced in Hungary, followed by synthetic cannabinoids in 2010, becoming extremely popular among consumers. The 2011 ESPAD study also showed that the prevalence of mephedrone use among 10th-grade students in Budapest was 10.2%. Since 1 January 2011, mephedrone has been banned, but several chemically related substances have appeared that are legal, available online or in certain shops, and have effects similar to stimulants (ESPAD, 2011). Those sold on the internet are generally marketed as not intended for human consumption but have no known use other than drugs (National Strategy on Drugs 2013-2020). The police and NGOs, and public organizations dealing with drugs have been confronted with some problems for which no successful response has been found for years - some of which, unfortunately, remain today. This has led to the need to develop a new and different drug policy (Sivadó 2014).

Some of the NPS entering the country are not considered drugs as they are not on any prohibition list, so their use and trafficking is not a criminal offense and therefore not on any register. However, a significant number of people regularly consume NPS, not on a prohibition list. Their use is particularly problematic in deprived communities, where many people living in extreme poverty use the drug, which they can afford because of its low price (Tihanyi et al. 2020). According to the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) 2014 study (Health, 2014), those who try drugs at a young age are particularly at risk because early experience increases the chances of later problem drug use and addiction (URL6). Frequent substance use in a younger generation may result in early school dropout, unprotected sexual contact, or delinquency. Early heavy cannabis use can be associated with poorer school performance, dropout, depression, health problems, co-use of other substances, and crime (Sumnall, Evans-Brown & McVeigh, 2011). Poverty, social polarization, and the lack of opportunities to catch up generate many criminological situations and problems (Lengyel, Vas, Lukovics & Gyurkovics, 2015).

The regulation of NPS is a significant problem around the world, mainly because it is not possible to define exactly what should be banned, and this is the problem the UK faced when it introduced a total ban (Reuter & Padro, 2017). However, the supply of primarily synthetic psychoactive substances that are not legally drugs has expanded to unprecedented levels in the last 4-5 years. These substances, which have no other use, are not on the drug schedules of the international (public) conventions, so their production, trade and distribution, and

even advertising, are uncontrolled and virtually free. Since the health risks of their consumption are significant, their regulation is justified. Based on foreign - mainly European - experience, worrying domestic developments, and - not least - social demands, a new Hungarian rule was launched in 2011. Background and legal context According to Act CLXXVI of 2011 on Medicinal Products for Human Use and Other Medicinal Products Regulating the Pharmaceutical Market, from 1 March 2012, the production and distribution of psychoactive substances not previously regulated are subject to authorization. Section 79(4) of the Act amended the Medicines Act and introduced the following definition of NPS (Ujváry, 2013).

Act XCV of 2005, § 1, item 37: *'An NPS is a newly marketed substance or group of substances or compounds, not having a medicinal use, which is capable of altering or modifying the state of consciousness, behavior, or perception by affecting the central nervous system and which may therefore pose a threat to public health. This is similar to that posed by the NPS means, as proclaimed by Decree-Law No. 4 of 1965, New York, 1961. substances listed in Schedules I and II of the Annex to the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, signed in Vienna on 21 February 1971, promulgated by Decree-Law No 25 of 1979, or in the schedules of psychotropic substances set out in Annex I and II to the Convention on Psychotropic Substances, signed in Vienna on 21 February 1971, or in Annex 2 to that, and has accordingly been classified as such by the Minister responsible for health by decree.'*

Initially, the Penal Code only criminalized the production, supply, transfer, placing on the market, and trafficking of NPS. Still, it did not criminalize its acquisition and possession once it reached 10 grams of a pure active substance. From 1 January 2016, the purchase and possession of small quantities of NPS were considered a misdemeanor (Act II of 2012, § 199/B.). Instead of addressing social and economic problems thoroughly, the legislator saw fit to increase the penalties in response to the criminal situation. 184.§. (4). of the Penal Code introduced, from the above date, the notion of NPS of a significant and particularly significant amount in addition to the not considerable amount. Paragraphs (5) to (8) of Section 461. define in detail the notions of small quantity for different types of substances, which for several kinds of substances is less than 2 grams as in the previous legislation, and of significant and particularly significant quantity. In addition to the above amendments, the penalties for the various offenses have also been changed, bringing them closer to those for drug-related crimes. The amendment essentially aligned the scope of criminal conduct related to NPS with traditional drugs, significantly increasing the risk of committing such offenses. Despite this, the experience of the last six months

shows that the tightening has not had a significant impact on crime. Criminalization has not substantially affected NPS uptake, as this group is essentially already habituated to these substances.

The dangers of NPS

Of course, in general, the prevalence of traditional drugs is still dominant, which primarily shows that the majority of drug users are in the more ‘developed’ and wealthier countries. Still, we should also note the phenomenon that NPS mainly threatens the more underdeveloped social strata of developing or developed countries (Fabio, 2019). The emergence of NPS was facilitated by the fact that they were not illegal drugs, as they were not included in the list of narcotic substances (Madras, 2016). Therefore, the primary need was to speed up the legislative process. The Hungarian solution included the new substances, which appeared on the market relatively quickly after their seizure, in the EMMI Decree 55/2014 (30.XII).⁴ From then on, they became criminal prosecutable. However, chemical compounds are being replaced by substances of other compositions entering the market so rapidly that now seized substances cannot be identified as NPS (Ritter, 2016). Experience has shown that by changing the substitutes for common base compounds, i.e. by exploiting loopholes in the regulation based on individual compounds, a large number of compounds with similar effects enter the drug market, posing a completely new challenge for legislators and authorities. Structural modifications to compounds can significantly affect the strength of psychoactivity, alter the potency and even increase toxicity through specific biological mechanisms. Since 2015, around 400 previously reported NPS have been found in Europe every year (EDR, 2021).

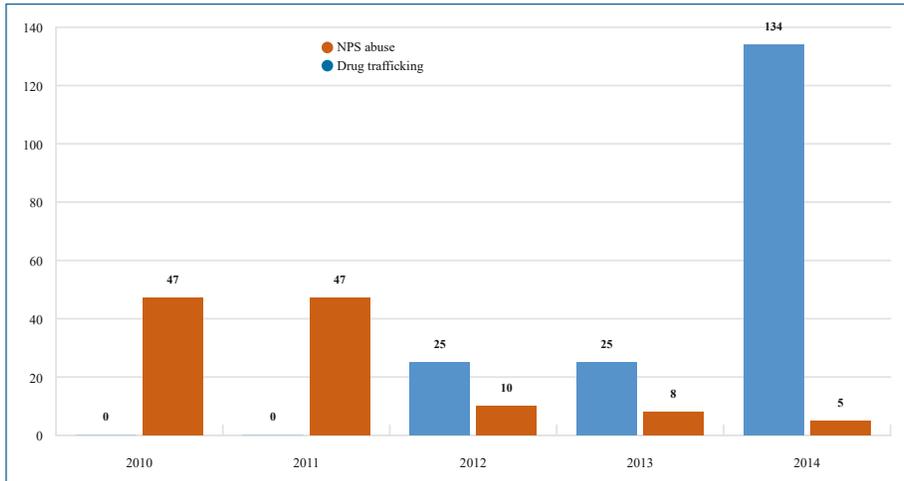
The 2013 UN Annual Report on Drugs calls for concerted action by countries to collectively eliminate the production, trade, and use of these substances. They are readily available online. Eighty-eight percent of countries with a domestic NPS market indicated that the internet plays a crucial role in supplying NPS to the domestic market (UN, 2013). They are marketed on these sites as bath salts, flavored fragrances, relaxing incense, herbal nutrients, with no long-term health effects (King & Kicman, 2011). Therefore, these substances are rapidly increasing in number and are also posing a growing threat to public health. In Europe, at least one sense appears on the market every week.

4 Decree of the Ministry of Human Resources (EMMI) on substances or groups of substances classified as new psychoactive substances

Situation of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County and Miskolc with regard to NPS abuse

As shown in the previous chapter, the abuse of NPS was not included in the category of priority crimes, so I relied on the data in the police database RZS (RobotZsaru) to quantify them.⁵

Figure 2. Evolution of criminal investigations ordered in connection with NPS and traditional drug trafficking at the Miskolc Police Station

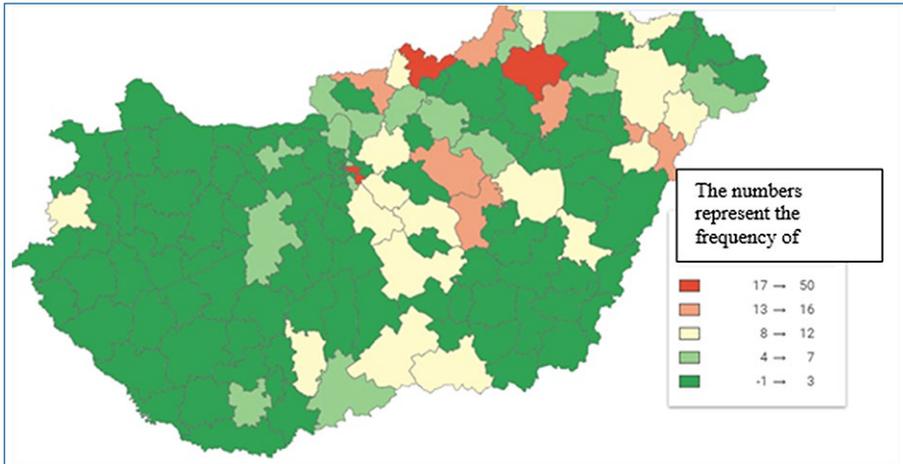


Source: Crime Statistics - Ministry of Interior ([URL7](#)).

When comparing the numbers of drug abuse and new psychoactive substance investigations, it can still be concluded that these two offenses with similar legal elements interact. Designer drug-related dealer behavior appeared in the statistics from 2012 onwards and has been overtaken by drugs. The NPS, as the 2014 data shows, has taken a monopoly in the world of mind-altering drugs, which would be sufficient reason to give it a position in the priority crime category or to take the place of drugs and give it priority there.

⁵ Robotzsaru (Robocop) is the integrated case management, case processing and electronic records management system used by the police, which contains a wealth of statistical data on crime.

Figure 3. Incidence of NPS abuse offenses by precinct by area in Hungary 2012-2020

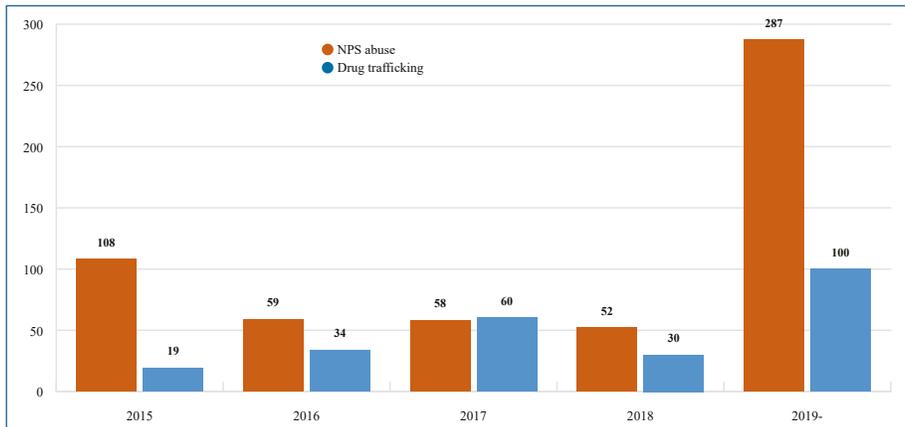


Source: Pre-stat, Lachner Centre (URL8).

The graph above, broken down to precinct level, shows that the Miskolc Police Precinct has committed the highest number of NPS offenses in Hungary since 2011, when it was introduced as a separate offense in the Criminal Code.

Relationship between drug trafficking and psychoactive substance abuse offenses in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County

Figure 4. Number of NPS and traditional drug trafficking offenses in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County



Source: Crime Statistics - Ministry of Interior (URL9).

As mentioned above in 2016, possession of a small amount (of what) became an infringement, so the above chart shows the decline (in what), which has increased significantly from 2019 onwards and is still the highest in the country. The trend observed in recent years has been that the consumption and trafficking of substances classified as NPS have overshadowed the classic drugs. In 2019, 71 consumers were interviewed as witnesses for NPS abuse, and 10 persons were treated as suspects of drug trafficking. The number of suspects in the cases (it means criminal case) ordered will continue to increase, given that several individuals have been named by those interviewed as consumers. Drug-related cases are typically committed in the city of Miskolc but not in other municipalities in our jurisdiction. This is not the case with NPS abuse, which is more prevalent in some limited regions of the town of Miskolc (Újgyőri main square, Numbered streets, Lyukóbánya), but is also significant in the surrounding municipalities of Felsőzsolca and Köröm. In all cases, the consumption of these drugs is linked to people living in extreme poverty, which represents a significant income for traders. In 2020, the Miskolc Police Station ordered investigations into 105 cases of NPS abuse and 75 cases of drug-related cases, for a total of 180 cases. The quantity of seized substances ranged from minimum (contamination, smearing) to 430 grams: NPS (5F-MDMB-PICA, 4-CMC, 4F-MDMB-BINACA, ethylheptedrone, ethylhexedrone, MDMB-4en-PINACA, etc.): 87, cannabis: 35, amphetamine: 5, ecstasy (MDMA): 5, cocaine: 2 cases (Miskolc police station data request).

The data show an increasing trend in the prevalence of both classical drugs (marijuana, speed (amphetamine), ecstasy (MDMA), cocaine) (from 62 to 75) and ‘designer’ drugs or NPS compared to the previous year 2019 (from 73 to 105 cases).

In a significant proportion of cases, the seizures of new psychoactive substances suspected of being present in the drug are below the threshold of a minor quantity, and the users are charged with offenses.

In 10 of the investigations ordered, the expert appointed concluded that the seized substance was neither a drug nor NPS. Two investigations (05010/2710 / 2020.bü and 05010/3268 / 2020.bü) in which two young people died after consuming the NPS 4F-MDMB-BICA, colloquially known as ‘BIKA,’ (meaning bull in Hungarian). In both cases, the person from whom they had purchased the substance before the consumption that caused their deaths, was identified and arrested.

The increase in the number of drug-related cases was partly due to the investigation of drugs from abroad, caught in the incoming parcel controls of the NAV Airport Directorate of Magyar Posta Zrt. on 1 July 2018. There have been 8 cases in this group of patients this year. The number of cases has been further increased by the changed measure of the prosecutor’s office, whereby consumers must be separated from the main file of the investigation during the

procedure and sent with a charge as a new case. This generates up to 5-10 additional issues for a single criminal case.

Therefore, the data analyzed shows that the police can rarely act effectively in cases of this offense, as the recent and constantly renewed substances are unknown to the authorities and cannot be criminalized in time. The above facts also show that a significant number of cases are closed because the seized substance, although having the same effects on the human body and the central nervous system as known and controlled substances, has not yet been prohibited by law.

In the case of NPS abuse offenses, it seems to be confirmed that the new types of drugs are being supplied in large numbers to disadvantaged people because of their easy availability and low prices. The known case figures for individual counties clearly show that most cases are concentrated in counties considered economically and socially disadvantaged. The highest values are found in the capital and Pest counties, while in the following counties the figures are below the national average (Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, Hajdú-Bihar, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok, Nógrád). In the period 2013-2017, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county had the highest values. It is certainly striking that there was hardly more NPS misuse in the capital than in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county (76↔69), which has a much smaller population, but there was also a small difference between Pest and Nógrád counties (34↔22), which certainly shows that there is a strong correlation between extreme poverty and psychoactive substance use (Table 1).

Table 1. Average number of drug-related offenses (number of cases) for each type of drug

Counties in Hungary	drug trafficking	drug possession	NPS abuse	facilitating the manufacture of drugs
Budapest	155	2119	76	3,8
Baranya	17	190	12	0,6
Bács-Kiskun	15	126	18	0,2
Békés	10	114	12	0,2
Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén	38	133	69	0
Csongrád	21	199	14	0,2
Fejér	20	235	13	0
Győr-Moson-Sopron	24	346	3	0
Hajdú-Bihar	20	131	27	0,2
Hives	7	81	17	0,2
Komárom-Esztergom	19	248	6	0,2
Nógrád	12	74	22	0
Pest	39	376	34	0,2
Somogy	13	125	7	0
Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg	17	131	33	0
Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok	9	113	26	0
Tolna	9	106	11	0,4
Vas	15	104	19	0,4
Veszprém	18	137	6	0
Zala	7	127	2	0

Source: Crime Statistics - Ministry of Interior ([URL10](#)).

Local government and law enforcement solutions to the NPS problem

The strategic objective is to make Miskolc an even safer municipality, meeting the requirements of objective security and the population's expectations. Government Decision 1744/2013. (X.17.2013.): *'Hungary's crime policy aims to strengthen public order, increase the security of public spaces, limit and reduce the volume of crime, mitigate the damage and negative effects of crime, provide adequate protection for families and individuals, and ultimately improve citizens' sense of security.'* (Government Decision 1744/2013 (X.17.), preamble).

The municipality intends to further strengthen professional cooperation between the municipal police, the police, and the bodies with appropriate information and competence in public order, public safety, and crime prevention. The primary objective is to achieve coordinated and organized work between the bodies and persons involved in this field, which may limit the number of criminal activities. Preventive presence, i.e., frequent checks on public areas, public places, and places at risk of crime, is of particular importance. The city administration is convinced that the visible presence of a police officer, municipal policeman, property guard, or vigilante can deter potential offenders from committing offenses. Their number will decrease in the future.

For 2021-2026, the Local Equal Opportunities Program of the Municipality of Miskolc County Municipality addresses young people using substances of abuse as a priority and considers its reduction a critical objective. As it puts it, the use of cheap and easily accessible drugs increases in deprived neighborhoods. To reduce harm, the operation of the Miskolc KEF16 (Resolution III-46 / 3.192 / 2001 of the General Assembly of the City of Miskolc) is of particular importance. Its task is to coordinate the work of the institutions and organizations operating in the city in prevention, supply reduction, treatment, care, and recovery. To achieve this goal, the position of the Drug Advisory Forum is strengthened and supported by the Municipality (2021-26 Miskolc Equal Opportunities Program. 2021, 40.) As the most recent 2021-26 Municipal Crime Prevention Strategy states: the priorities of The National Crime Prevention Strategy should be complemented by the prevention and treatment of drug use and drug-related crime, with particular attention to the affected areas of the city, such as the Újgyőr square, the cemetery, the Lyukobánya area, by applying the specificities of the city of Miskolc. Miskolc is an area of fundamental vulnerability, both in drug use and the development of an associated trafficking layer. Analyzing the trends, it will be necessary for the future to step up the fight against this problem by orders of magnitude, not only by law enforcement means but

by all other means that influence social life. At present, it is still unpredictable what serious social conflicts could arise if the process is not slowed down or stopped (Miskolc Crime Prevention Strategy 2021-26).

Municipal patrol

Based on the cooperation agreement signed on 3 September 2012 between the Miskolc Municipality and the Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County Police Headquarters, the 20-strong foot patrol service started working in the most frequented areas of the city. Under the agreement, the pedestrian patrol service comprises police and public area patrol pairs, whose task is to strengthen public safety. Miskolc's town council has taken on the cost of setting up and running the patrol service, stating that the local authority has a primary duty to care for local public safety. The city is taking this step to combat deviant behavior that harms society and quality of life, thus improving the safety of the population.

The cooperation with the municipality continued in 2015, ie, for the third year in succession, the police have received support for public safety and public order protection tasks with joint patrol services, which has led to an increase in the subjective sense of security of the population. For 2015, the donor provided a gross amount of HUF 65,000,000 to implement this task. In all cases, the location of the patrols was adapted to the needs of the population and the municipalities. To ensure that the selection of the most prominent areas requiring patrols was based on actual problems, the head of the public order department of the police station, the public safety officer of the municipality, and the law enforcement agency representative were in constant contact.

The staff is on duty every day from 14:00 to 22:00, with the addition of a car patrol and a joint surveillance duty from 06:00 on Saturday to 06:00 on Monday. On weekdays, there are usually eight mixed pairs (police officer - public guard or field officer), one police officer pair, one motorist and one surveillance pair, and two police officer pairs ([URL11](#)).

Development of a surveillance system

In Miskolc, 207 cameras have been installed (until 05.09.2021), some of which are fixed, ie, they cannot be rotated, focus on a specific area, and scan the area in 360 degrees, and there are also number plate recognition cameras.

Staff working in the Miskolc Municipal Police building monitor the city's covered areas 24 hours a day. They can detect minor things, such as a dog walking without its owner picking up the dog's litter, alert nearby colleagues on duty in the public area or can call an ambulance for a person who has fallen ill at a tram stop. Furthermore, the police often request footage that could be decisive evidence of a crime (Miskolc Crime Prevention Strategy 2021-26). *'It is indeed possible to see that these cameras can be used as a preventive measure to maintain public order and public safety'* ([URL12](#)).

Summary

In my study, I investigated the extent to which the spread of NPS, which was criminalized in 2012, was influenced by the classic drug's cheapness, regulation, and a region's socio-economic underdevelopment. As a hypothesis, I formulated that the emergence and spread of NPS are primarily concentrated in suburbanized, deprived areas. From this point of view, I presented Miskolc, one of the most disadvantaged cities in Hungary. To get an idea of where NPS started from and what conditions made their dominance over classical drugs possible. In this place, people from low social status, forming a subculture, typically supported themselves by petty theft. Taking advantage of regulatory failures and the ease of access to the drug, they switched to selling mind-altering drugs. The shift, in the beginning, was also facilitated by the fact that possession and consumption of the drug was not a criminal offense, which increased the consumer base. The financial benefits for the dealers of serving it were considerable. By 2016, the new legislation had reached the point where the consumer was threatened with an infringement, but this did not deter them. From 2021, quantity limits were set, as for classic drugs, and possession of small quantities became a criminal offense (Act C of 2012, § 184. (4)). However, criminalizing the offense is not enough to curb demand for the drug, especially as the online trade-in drugs make it increasingly difficult to detect and prove such offenses. Conventional drug tests make use undetectable, which increases consumer confidence: this is particularly dangerous for naïve, 'virgin' consumers, for whom it is desirable to try designer drugs, creating the illusion of safety. Comprehensive social programs are needed, and, in terms of law enforcement, the main priority should be to oblige addicted users to use health services to help them quit. In contrast, highly severe penalties for dealers could be used next. NPS, therefore, requires a very different treatment from the authorities than the traditional drugs known so far ([Peacock et al, 2019](#)).

The city of Miskolc has also recognized the new psychoactive problems. This is why a so-called eradication program for segregated areas was launched in 2008 as a solution to partially eliminate the conditions that foster crime (Anti-segregation plan, 2008). The municipal police initiate infringement proceedings as a law enforcement measure against drug addicts in public places. However, this is not sufficient. Potential users should be aware that NPS users' bodies deteriorate more rapidly than classical drug addicts. There is no possibility of more severe relief of the psychological symptoms of addiction by substitute medication. The emergence and spread of NPS in the more backward regions make it extremely difficult for these regions to catch up, perpetuate backwardness, and render meaningless the catch-up programs designed to improve competitiveness. Exist NPS problems in cities undermine the long-term prospects for urban development by hampering the city's ability to retain a well-educated young population. Because of such crime tendencies, the city will not be a liveable and attractive destination for the young who would be the guarantors of the long-term development of the cities. In the light of the above, I see the NPS as a huge threat, especially related to rural, impoverished communities, as drug-related crime will also be a feature of poorer communities. The NPS, therefore, represents nothing more than differentiation of drug availability by social position, which slows down or makes impossible the catching-up of such people and municipalities.

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Vári, V. (2022). Crimes related to new psychoactive substances in rural segregates of Miskolc in Hungary. *Belügyi Szemle*, 70(SI2), 37–57. <https://doi.org/10.38146/BSZ.SPEC.2022.2.3>