

EU Study Guide

Female Political Leadership



Gender equality is a pillar of European democracy, yet women remain underrepresented in politics. The European Committee of the Regions has taken a step forward with its Gender Equality Action Plan, but more must be done. We call on Member States to ensure balanced representation and empower more women to lead at the local and regional levels. ...When women and girls thrive, communities prosper, leadership strengthens, and society moves forward."

President of the European Committee of the Regions, Kata Tüttő, International Women's Day 2025

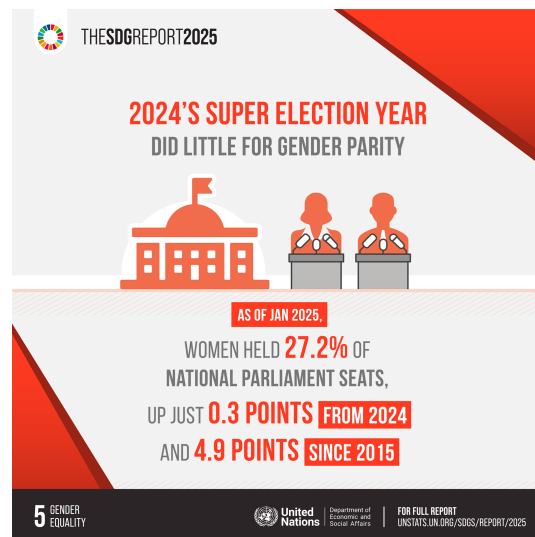
"We cannot succeed when half of us are held back".

Malala Yousafzai (21 July 2013)

Dear Delegates, this study guide is designed to introduce you to the topic that you will be discussing in your committee: European Union.

Gender inequality

The issue of gender inequality includes environments in which sex and/or gender determine different rights for women and men, as well as the assumption of stereotyped social and cultural roles. Throughout history most social groups and communities were patriarchal. With the rise of the Feminist movement, there has been gradual progress, and today the debate about gender inequality plays a key role in global politics. The progress that was made in the last decades is undeniable, yet major gaps remain. These include equal payment, violence against women and girls, role in the family, gender discrimination, early and forced marriage and representation of women in government, with the last point considered central to driving additional improvements through law and policy. Gender inequality is holding back men and women, as it [hinders global development](#). This committee will focus on the issue of female political leadership, a topic of particular importance in the European Union.



<https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>

Political leadership is a key part of ensuring a more comprehensive gender equality: female political leaders can be expected to have greater empathy for and consideration of the challenges that women face, as well as being themselves a barometer of broader gender equality advances. Thus a 2023 [World Bank report](#) showed the ties between female political leadership and more inclusive and gender equal legislation. This could in turn [achieve a 20% increase in global GDP](#).

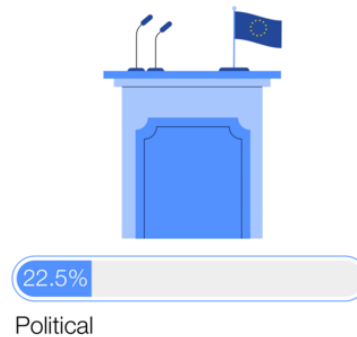
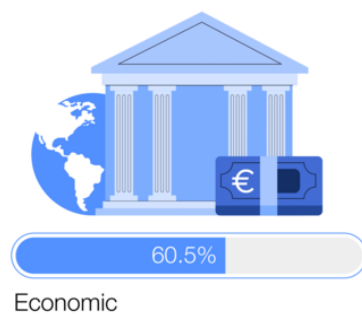
Unfortunately, political leadership is still one of the areas with the greatest level of inequality: with only 27 countries having a female head of state, most countries having never had a female

president or prime minister, and [just a quarter of parliament seats](#), the UN warns that it will take [another 130 years](#) to achieve gender parity in political leadership at the current rate of progress.

Global Gender Gap Report 2024

Largest gender gaps

The two largest gaps to bridge are in Economic Participation and Opportunity, and Political Empowerment



Source: Global Gender Gap Report 2024

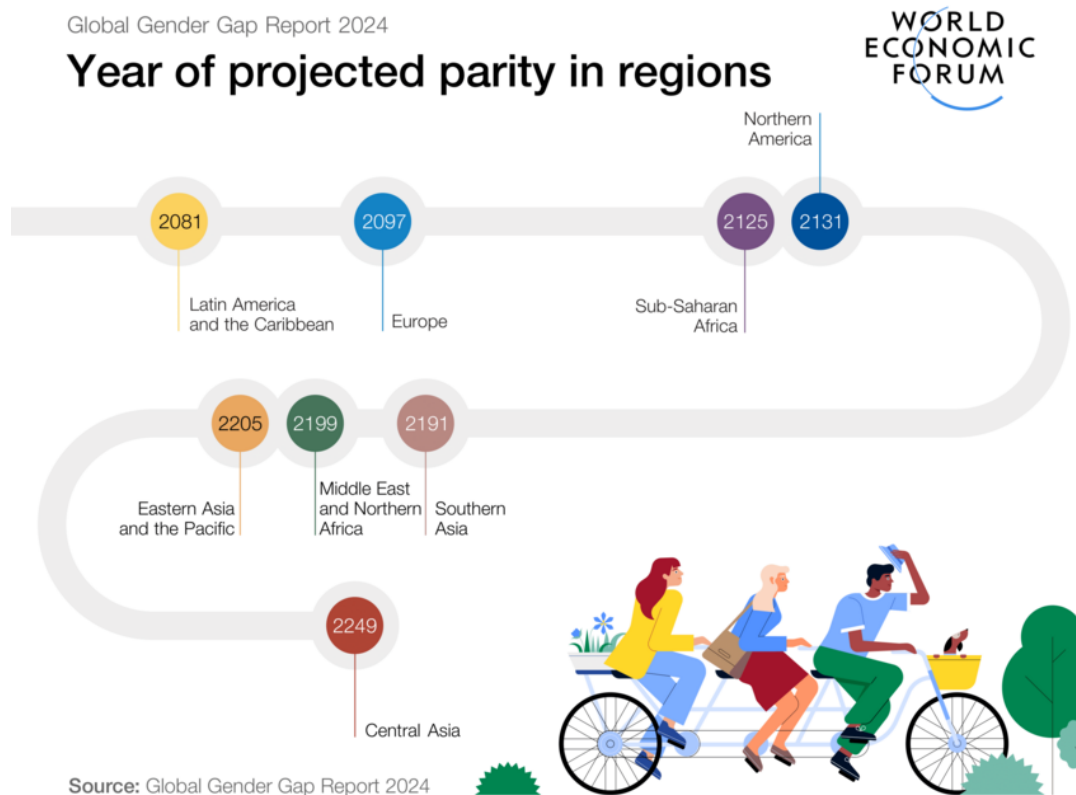
<https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2024/shareables-20b17bbe3a/>

The UN has recognized gender equality as a core part of global peace and development since its founding. The Commission on the Status of Women ([CSW](#)) was founded in 1946 to address issues related to gender equality and women's rights. The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women ([CEDAW](#)) was ratified in 1981 with 20 countries—today it has been ratified by nearly all UN member [states](#). The [Beijing Platform for Action](#) in 1995 remains a key global plan of action, and in 2010 [UN Women](#) was founded. In 2015 the UN reaffirmed the importance of gender equality [by dedicating SDG 5](#) as one of 17 sustainable development goals.

With five EU members led by female heads of state or government (along with another seven non-EU European countries), and over a third of national governments and parliamentarians women, the EU is the region closest to gender parity, yet even here, there is still a significant gap. In [only four EU countries](#) were at least half of the government members female, while in countries like Czechia and Hungary women make up less than 10% of the government. Looking at the parliamentary level, not a single EU member was able to boast full equality, and many countries still have more than 20% male parliaments.

The EU has taken concrete steps to improve the situation, including its "[For More Women in Politics](#)" program, the work of the [European Institute for Gender Equality](#), EU Gender Equality

Strategy 2020-2025, and more initiatives. The broader [European Charter for Equality](#) commits the EU to full equality including race, gender, and ethnicity, and calls for local-national partnerships to achieve that goal.



<https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2024/shareables-20b17bbe3a/>

Key Players

- **UN Women and CSW:** The leading UN bodies for advancing gender equality. Although the EU has the resources to advance gender equality on its own, partnering with relevant UN bodies can help accelerate change, and set a good example for the rest of the world.
- **EU governments:** Whether through educational policies, quotas in elections, appointment of ministers and designating spots in campaign lists, it is the governments of the EU which will most directly impact this issue.
- **Media:** Plays an important role through its framing of individual politicians, as well as on the issue of female representation in politics in general.
- **Women's rights NGOs and networks:** NGOs and networks dedicated to this issue, like the [European Women's Lobby](#) and [Women Political Leaders network](#), have considerable influence in connecting private and public sector interests.

- **Voters:** EU Voters choose their representatives, so whether it is voting in more female candidates in primaries, prioritizing parties who have greater female representation, or voting directly for female heads of state, EU citizens can make their preferences known to achieve gender equality in political representation.

Country wise data on women representation*

Women representation in parliament varies across different democracies



Moving forward: Trinamool Congress MPs take selfies at the Parliament House complex during the first session of the 18th Lok Sabha, on June 25. PTI

Country	% of elected women	Quota in Parliament	Quota in political parties
Sweden	46%	No	Yes
South Africa	45%	No	Yes
Australia	38%	No	Yes
France	38%	No	Yes
Germany	35%	No	Yes
U.K.	40%	No	Yes
U.S.	29%	No	No
Pakistan	16%	Yes	No
Bangladesh	20%	Yes	No

*(as of September 2023) |

<https://www.drishtiias.com/daily-updates/daily-news-analysis/political-representation-of-women>

Key issues

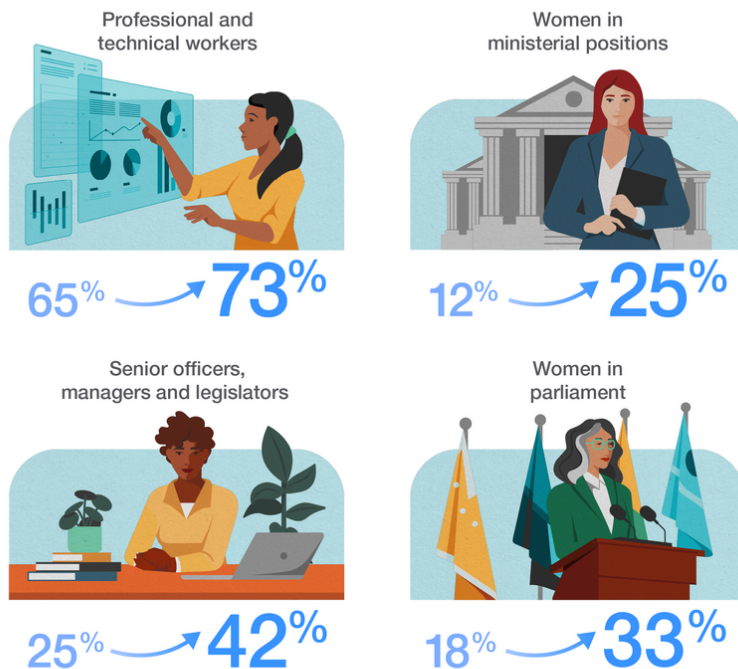
- **Prejudices and stereotypes:** assumptions about women in power makes it [more difficult for women to get elected](#), making women who do succeed more competent on average (leading to the paradox that women are less likely to get elected, but more likely to be reelected).
- **Abuse:** Sexism and misogyny can often lead to verbal abuse or violence towards female politicians. Social media and [AI has only heightened the threat](#) to female political leaders.
- **Expectations:** Social norms and expectations impact us from a young age, and tomorrow's potential female parliamentarians may not even explore their options if they don't see role models, or female political leaders are not present and salient for them.
- **Media:** Representation of women in political leadership on TV, in movies and via social media have a significant influence in willingness to accept female leadership. A proactive campaign to highlight positive female leadership can go a long way in changing stereotypes, while negative campaigns can set back the efforts.
- **Religious and traditional views:** Religiously or socially conservative societies are often where women face the greatest challenge to make progress. The level of conservatism as well as the attitudes of traditional leaders will thus affect women's political prospects.

- **Quotas:** Some countries, like [Saudi Arabia](#) or [India](#), have tried to use quotas to ensure that women receive a minimal level of representation, but this approach is [controversial](#), and if poorly implemented, [it can fail](#).
- **Political systems:** different methods are used to choose politicians, from parties that choose their own lists, to primaries, to government appointed cabinets. Which changes can be made to accelerate gender equality for each system?
- **Empowerment programs:** aim to identify rising stars and give them tools, experiences, and a supportive network to maximize the chances of success in the cut-throat world of politics.
- **Helping peace and stability:** The UN took note of the important link between women, peace and conflict in [Security Council resolution 1325](#). More female political leadership, while not a panacea, could lead to more compromise, fewer wars, and more global peace.

Advancing gender parity



In just under two decades, global efforts advanced economic and political gender parity significantly.
(Change in gender parity score* between 2006 and 2025)



* A 0-100 score showing how close an indicator is to gender parity.
Source: World Economic Forum, (2025). *Global Gender Gap Report 2025*.

<https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2025/shareables-bd51abcbeb/>

Guiding Questions

- Where does your country rank in [political participation](#)? Does it have significant female leadership?
- What is your country's position toward gender inequality overall? Has it made recent improvements, or passed any important laws or achievements?
- Is there a national action plan or other national agenda to create change?
- Has your country spoken out on this issue at the global level?
- Is your country part of any regional or other blocs that could impact its position?
- What do you think is the best way to address this issue?

Links

- [Gender equality index](#)
- [5 Solutions](#)
- [UN FAQs](#)
- [UN SDG 5](#)
- [Women in political leadership](#)
- [Facts and figures](#)
- [Women and leadership in the EU](#)
- [Elimination of Discrimination against women](#)
- [Law and gender equality](#)
- [UN Review](#)

Reports and Resolutions

- [2025 Global Gender Gap report](#)
- [2024 Gender Equality report: EU](#)
- [UN Women report](#)
- UNGA Report [79/111](#) Women in Development

Videos

- [Timeline](#)
- [Gender equality](#)
- [Why gender equality is good for everyone](#)
- [Get creative about gender equality](#)

EU Study Guide

Transnational Drug Trade



The current drugs situation in the EU requires comprehensive and multisector responses across security, health and social policy covering the law enforcement, scientific, environmental, socio-political, technological and international dimensions of the issue. A people-centred and human rights-oriented approach are the cornerstones of EU drugs policy

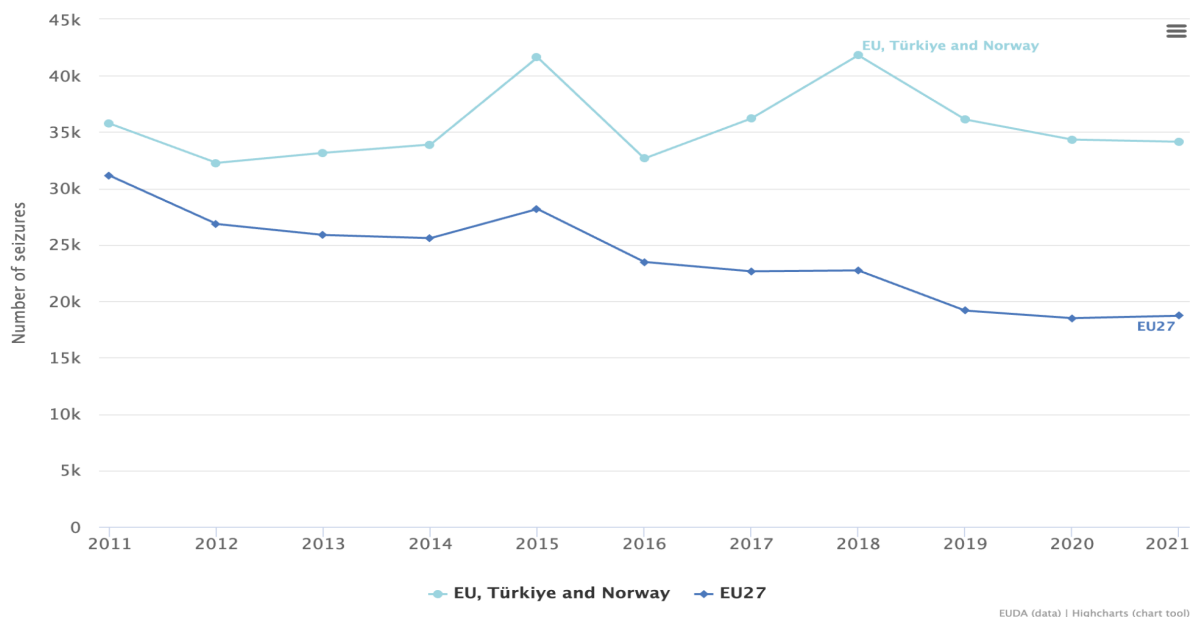
[EU Migration and Home Affairs page](#)

Transnational Drug Trade in Europe

Drug Trafficking is a global illicit trade involving the cultivation, manufacture, distribution, and sale of substances which are subjected to drug prohibition laws. It is highly regarded as one of the most serious security threats facing Europe today, which is only becoming more prevalent as time goes on. In recent years there has been an unprecedented increase in illicit drugs throughout Europe, particularly cocaine which is mainly imported from South America. Drug trading itself is not only highly illegal and harmful, but is also often involved in other crimes. Half of the most threatening criminal networks throughout the EU are involved in drug trading as it is one of the main sources of profit and it is estimated to represent 20% of global crime proceeds. Half of all homicides in Europe are directly connected to drug trafficking.

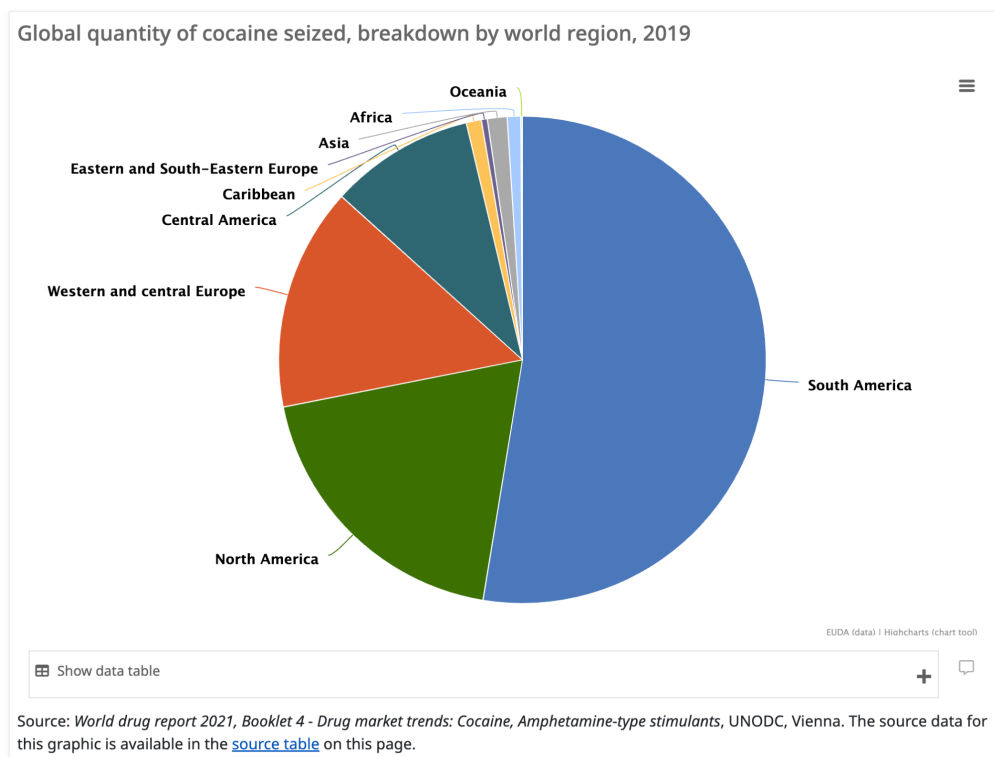
The two main drugs being transported throughout Europe are **heroin** and **cocaine**. **Heroin** seizure in Europe was at its peak in 2011. By 2021 it had dropped by 40%. This decline was due to many factors, the main one being the deprioritization of law enforcement in the interception of objects. Despite the decline in seizures, the amount of heroin seized more than doubled, from 4.2 tonnes in 2011 to 9.5 tonnes in 2021. At the time, the amount seized in 2021 marked the highest annual quantity seized in the last two decades. 22.2 tonnes of heroin were seized in Turkey alone, bringing the total amount seized from the EU, Turkey, and Norway to 31.8 tonnes in 2021.

Number of heroin seizures in the EU, Türkiye and Norway, 2011-2021



Cocaine has an important relationship with South America, as it is not only the main exporter to Europe, but 52.6% of cocaine seizures have occurred there. This makes it the country with the

most cocaine seizures and almost tripling second place (North America at 19.3%). In 2019 a record 1,436 tonnes of cocaine were seized worldwide. Quantities increased by 50% between 2015 and 2019, making cocaine the second most seized drug at the time. Record levels of cocaine have also entered the EU in containers through numerous ports along transatlantic cocaine routes. The EUDA (European Union Drugs Agency) states: “The intensification and diversification of cocaine trafficking activity targeting the EU have continued since the last EU Drugs Market Report (EMCDDA and Europol, 2019). Record levels of cocaine production have been matched by record quantities seized, especially from containers handled in numerous ports along the transatlantic cocaine routes.”



Responses

The EU is taking strategic and operational measures to reduce drug supply and demand by working closely with partners at both national and international levels (EU institution bodies and agencies, as well as civil society organizations). The two main groups in the drugs field in the EU and internationally are [The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction](#) and [Europol](#) (the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation).

Through the EU Drugs strategy, the EU coordinates and balances evidence-based and integrated measures internally and represents the EU internationally. Police and law enforcement action is coordinated via [EMPACT](#) (The European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats).

In 2021 the Commission made [*The EU Agenda and Action Plan on Drugs*](#), a strategy aiming to:

- 1) Protect and improve the well-being of society and of the individual
- 2) Protect and promote public health
- 3) Offer a high level of security and well-being for the general public
- 4) Increase health literacy

Most EU countries have laws criminalizing the possession and distribution of illicit substances. However, their policies mostly regard drug use as a public health as opposed to a criminal issue.

Many organizations have been formed throughout Europe to solve these issues. Some connected to the EU and some not. For example, Eurojust's European Judicial Organized Crime Network is an organization which aims to streamline cooperation with prosecutors throughout the EU, especially regarding drug related crime. It should be noted, a lot of solutions for drug trafficking are extensions to solutions for organized crime because of how heavily connected they are.

There's also more proactive solutions, like Operation Trojan Shield: is a global sting operation coordinated by Europol in 2021 which targeted crime syndicates including drug traffickers, mafias, and gangs. The operation led to over 800 arrests across 16 countries.

There are also multiple operations that target more specific aspects, like the corruption in many ports in Hamburg, in which many dockers, security personnel, and even prosecutors work as insiders for organized crime. Or Operation ATLANTA, which was an EU Naval mission that disrupted trade routes and trafficking operations.

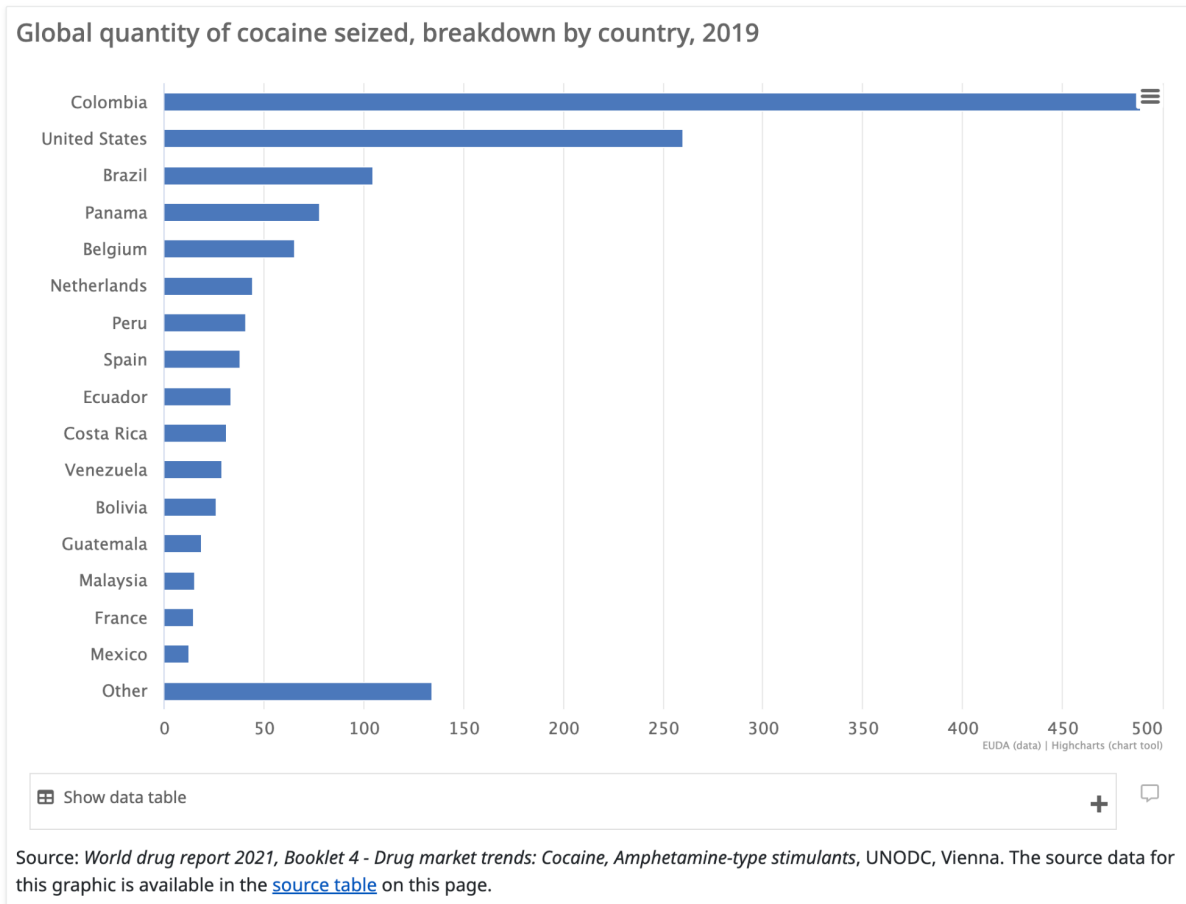
Regardless, most solutions have a few key details in common, those being:

- Strengthening border control and law enforcement
- Dealing with organized crime networks
- International and regional cooperation
- Reducing remand

Key Players

- **UNODC:** The UN Office of Drugs and Crime leads the effort to coordinate globally against illicit drug networks.
- **European Union Drug Agency (EUDA):** The EU's designated drug agency.
- **Drug producers:** Much of the world's drug production comes from a small number of countries whose economies have become reliant on drug sales, like Afghanistan.
- **Drug smuggling routes:** Balkan countries are an example of countries through which drugs enter Europe from Africa or Asia.
- **Organized crime:** Organized crime groups often use drug sales to fund their activities.

- **Consumers:** Drug users constitute the demand, providing economic incentive for illegal drugs to enter the European market.



Key Issues

- **Organized Crime:** Drugs, especially cocaine, are mainly transported by organized crime networks. For example, in Italy, the Calabrian mafia controls a significant share of cocaine transit and collaborates with other crime groups in order to distribute more
- **Corruption and Bribery:** Bribery is common when smuggling drugs through borders and ports. From 2018 to 2023 there was a [750% increase in cocaine smuggling in Hamburg](#), Germany due to corruption involving police and even prosecutors.
- **Digital Innovation/Technology:** In recent years, the drug market has become even more out of control due to the internet. It is easier to sell and buy drugs than it has even been before. Many markets have [popped up on the Dark Web](#) that focus on delivering drugs.
- **Violence and Public Health:** Drugs like stimulants have been known to [result in violent outbursts](#) as a result of taking them. The drug trade and the organizations involved in it also contribute to increased gang violence.

Guiding Questions

- Does your country have a national action plan on drug usage?
- Has your country implemented any recent laws or policies to combat drug trafficking?
- Should the drug issue be treated as a public health or criminal law issue?
- How can technology be used to stop drug trafficking?
- What steps can EU countries take to improve coordination in combating illicit drugs?
- Beyond detection and enforcement, what can be done to reduce demand for illicit drugs?

Links/Resources

- [EU Roadmap to Fight Drug Trafficking and Organized Crime](#)
- [2025 World Drug Report](#)
- [2025 EU Drugs Report](#)
- [EU Drugs Policy](#)
- [Europe's Drug Situation in 2025](#)
- [DATA/STATISTICS ON DRUGS IN EUROPE](#)
- [Europe Drug Trafficking Facts](#)
- [UNODC - United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime](#)

FUN FACTS :)

- Heroin was once legal and used as a cough medicine
- The oldest known drug is opium
- These aren't important, I just think they're interesting
- Banana shipments were found stuffed with cocaine in many EU countries
- In some cities, rats test positive for drugs
- Traffickers have used pigeons to transport drugs across borders