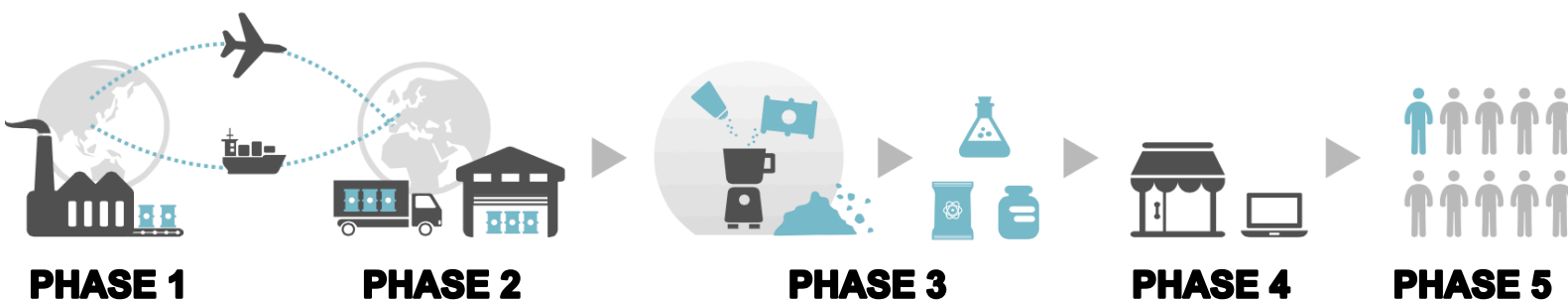


**Introduction**

According to the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs Novel Psychoactive Substances (NPS) are, “psychoactive drugs which are not prohibited by the United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs or by the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, and which people in the UK are seeking for intoxicant use.”<sup>1</sup> The increasing popularity of NPS over the past decade has seen an increasing number of different substances being brought onto the market (see figure 1). Currently much of the research that is being done on NPS relates to their toxicity, issues related to their legality or usage trends. Despite this mounting interest little is currently known about how these drugs are being brought onto the market. In addition, due to the perceived harm that these drugs are causing, countries around the world have enacted various laws, which are aimed at restricting the availability and use of NPS; however very little research has been carried out on how these laws impact their route to market.



**What we think we know**

- Phase 1: Factories located in China and India synthesise large quantities of NPS
- Phase 2: NPS are transported to various countries around the world
- Phase 3: NPS are packaged as research chemicals, plant food, bath salts.
- Phase 4: NPS are openly sold online as well as in high street “head shops”
- Phase 5: NPS is used by consumers

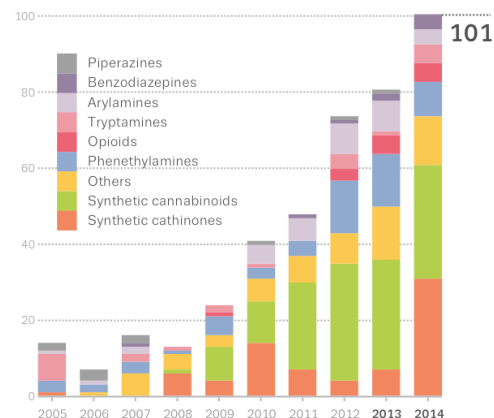


Figure 1: Number of new NPS reported to the EU Early Warning System between 2005-2014<sup>2</sup>

**What I hope to learn**

The study aims to reveal exactly how these substances are being brought onto the market as well as examine the interactions taking place between the different actors involved in each phase of the production cycle. In order to obtain this information the study hopes to answer the following questions: What impact do current legislative approaches towards NPS have on their route to market? What are the driving factors behind manufactures decision to produce specific drugs?; How does the trafficking/manufacturing process differ from that of more established illicit drugs?; What steps are traffickers/manufacturers taking to counter law enforcement measures?

**Methods**

This qualitative study will collect data using in-depth semi structured interviews. Interviews will be conducted with individuals who have knowledge or are involved in the different phases of the production cycle i.e. law enforcement, head shop owners, internet distributors.

**Wider implications of research**

Ultimately the study aims to give academics and policy makers a better understanding of how the NPS industry operates as well as help identify potential areas of weakness, which may be exploited. These weaknesses will be critically examined in order to identify prospective solutions for creating more effective drug policy

**References**

1. Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs 2011 , Consideration of the novel psychoactive substances ('legal highs') . 1st edn, Home Office.
2. EMCDDA (European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction) (2014). New psychoactive substances in Europe: An update from the EU Early Warning System

For more information about this project or life as a Marie Curie Early Stage Researcher visit my blog at <http://www.intrepid-forensics.eu/project-7/> or scan the QR code below.

