

# RIGA MUNICIPAL POLICE

## Latvian Police on drug fatalities



RĪGAS PILSĒTAS  
PAŠVALDĪBA

**RĪGA 2016**



# Prevalence of spice in Riga (I)

Trading places of spice in Riga appeared in year 2011, when the first spice stores were opened in the city center and the adjacent territories. Until then spice was available on the internet, but the demand for it and the number of users began to rise immediately after spice became available in stores. After spice stores began opening it became as freely available as bread or milk.

Combating and limitation of prevalence of spice was a great challenge for police officers, because spice was not prohibited by law as a narcotic or psychotropic substance, so the police had to invent new methods and act creatively, but within the legal requirements.

Spice traders used the advantage of deficiencies in law successfully, as they were informed that spice marketing is not subjected to criminal sanctions. In addition they continued to open more spice stores.

Considering prevalence rates of spice, the availability of it became a major public issue, especially in Riga. Spice was known as legal drugs within the society.

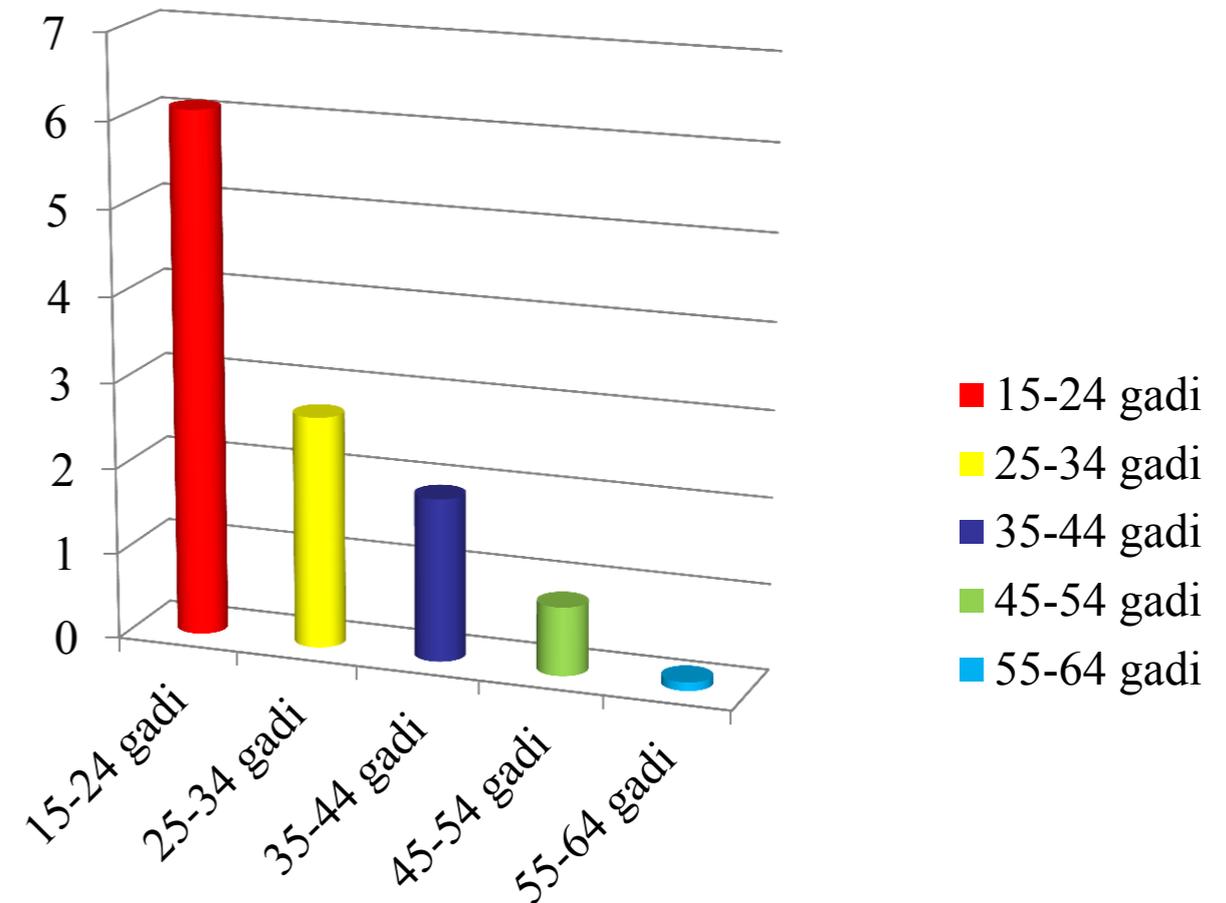


# Prevalence of spice in Riga (II)

Due to the availability of spice, it became popular among young people, especially minors, because other intoxicating substances, such as tobacco or alcohol were not available for them.

Almost all drugs and also spice most commonly were available in Riga (tried by about 5.5% of inhabitants) compared with the rest of Latvia (tried by less than 2% of inhabitants).\*

**Spice tried by in different age groups in 2012 (%)**



Avots: Sniķere u.c. 2012



# Prevalence of spice in Riga (III)

Spice was particularly common between two categories of young people: 1) young people from families with difficult material and social conditions, 2) young people from wealthy families and prestigious schools, who used spice because they could afford it.

Euphoria and intoxication, visual hallucinations with color perception changes, paranoia, aggressive and unpredictable behavior were caused by spice.

Cases in which a spice user, being intoxicated, considered himself a superhero who is able to recover, and cut himself with a pair of scissors, inflicting on himself more than a hundred wounds, have been documented by Latvian medics.\*



Picture: apollo.tvnet.lv



# Prevalence of spice in Riga (IV)

The business of spice dealers was based on a famous expression - time is money, so spice stores worked both – day and night, without holidays.

To hide the real purpose of dealing spice, dealers offered it as incense, plant fertilizer, cleaning tool for water pipes, etc.

Instructions and warnings were added on the packaging of spice, stating that it is not intended for internal use and it can be dangerous, but this did not prevent people, especially young people, to use it.



## CENU LAPA

0.1 g – 1.50 EUR  
0.25 g – 2.90 EUR  
0.50 g – 4.30 EUR  
1.00 g – 7.00 EUR

## DARBA LAIKS

**00:00 – 24:00**

SIA „KUDO”

Reģ. Nr. 50103675161

Jur. Adrese: Kārļa Ulmaņa gatve 2, Rīga, LV-1004

2014/02/05



# Limitation of spice prevalence (I)

In order to combat spice dealers, more effective law enforcement authorities, including the State Police of Latvia, the Riga Municipal Police, the Consumer Rights Protection Centre, the State Revenue Service and the Health Inspectorate, agreed on joint cooperation.

Such cooperation was significant and important, because until spice realization was not criminalized, to combat the prevalence of spice, administrative methods were used.

To combat the spice problem, each institution worked within their competence, individually and through joint raids and spice store inspections.





# Limitation of spice prevalence (II)

To remove spice from circulation, legitimate grounds were necessary. Based on fact that dealers did not have the original documents (invoices) of trading spice, their stock was removed.

Inspections in spice stores were carried out several times a day to limit the maximum prevalence of the deadly substance.

Due to the fact that spice stores were mostly located in leased premises, the police officers actively negotiated with the owners of the premises and asked to terminate contracts in order to prevent the prevalence of the spice. Unfortunately, in most cases the owners of the premises did not terminate the lease agreement, because the profits were more important than public safety and health.



Foto: Delfi.lv





## Limitation of spice prevalence (III)

The number of spice stores was constantly changing because of law enforcement activities, many shops were closed, but instead new stores were opened. Most of the spice stores in Riga operated exactly in the middle of year 2013, when their number in comparison with the year 2012 was doubled and even reached a number of **50**.

During year 2013 more than **8 500** packages of spice were removed from spice stores by Riga Municipal Police officers.

An expert opinion showed that spice contains new psychoactive substances, which are not yet included in the list of banned substances, but their impact on human health is as dangerous or more dangerous than the classic drugs (heroin, hashish, amphetamine).

Due to the fact that the spice issue did not decrease, the police and other authorities submitted various proposals for law amendments to the Cabinet of Ministers to put an end to the problem.



# Limitation of spice prevalence (IV)

Combating the prevalence of spice by administrative methods was ineffective. So, fines of almost **1 000 000** euros were applied to spice dealers for various administrative offenses by the Riga Municipal Police, but none of them were paid.

The main issue was the fact that after the fine application spice dealers liquidated businesses and did not pay the penalties applied, but founded new businesses instead. If the persons who previously led spice companies were banned from trading, third persons who formally were the company managers, were involved.

Basically the true owners and managers of spice stores remained in the shade and did not reveal themselves publicly, to avoid issues with law enforcement agencies.



# Involvement of society to combat spice (I)

While politicians discussed the ways and methods to limit prevalence of spice, the society, using non-violent methods, involved in the combat against spice.

Activist organization "Stop Drugs" was formed by inhabitants of Riga, carrying out an awareness campaign against the prevalence of spice, and also going to spice stores and deterring customers from buying spice.





# Involvement of society to combat spice (II)

A new broadcast *Legal death* was launched by the First Television Channel of Latvia in year 2014.

The broadcast contained information regarding current events of prevalence of spice, as well as actively drew up the attention of politicians to the existing issues.

Some individuals attempted to limit the prevalence of the spice by criminal methods. Several spice stores were burned down. It is possible that it was also a war between spice businesses.





# Riga Municipal Police Special Task Unit(I)

Special Task Unit was created in the beginning of year 2014, its main task was to quickly and efficiently find a solution for new-found problems effecting public order and safety. Main goals for first months of 2014 was to control and diminish the sales of new psychoactive substances also known as "legal drugs".

As of now Special Task Unit is carrying out multiple control measures on alcoholic beverage and tobacco product circulation, and restricting prostitution.

Special Task Unit has day and night car-patrol units which grants working policemen 24/7.

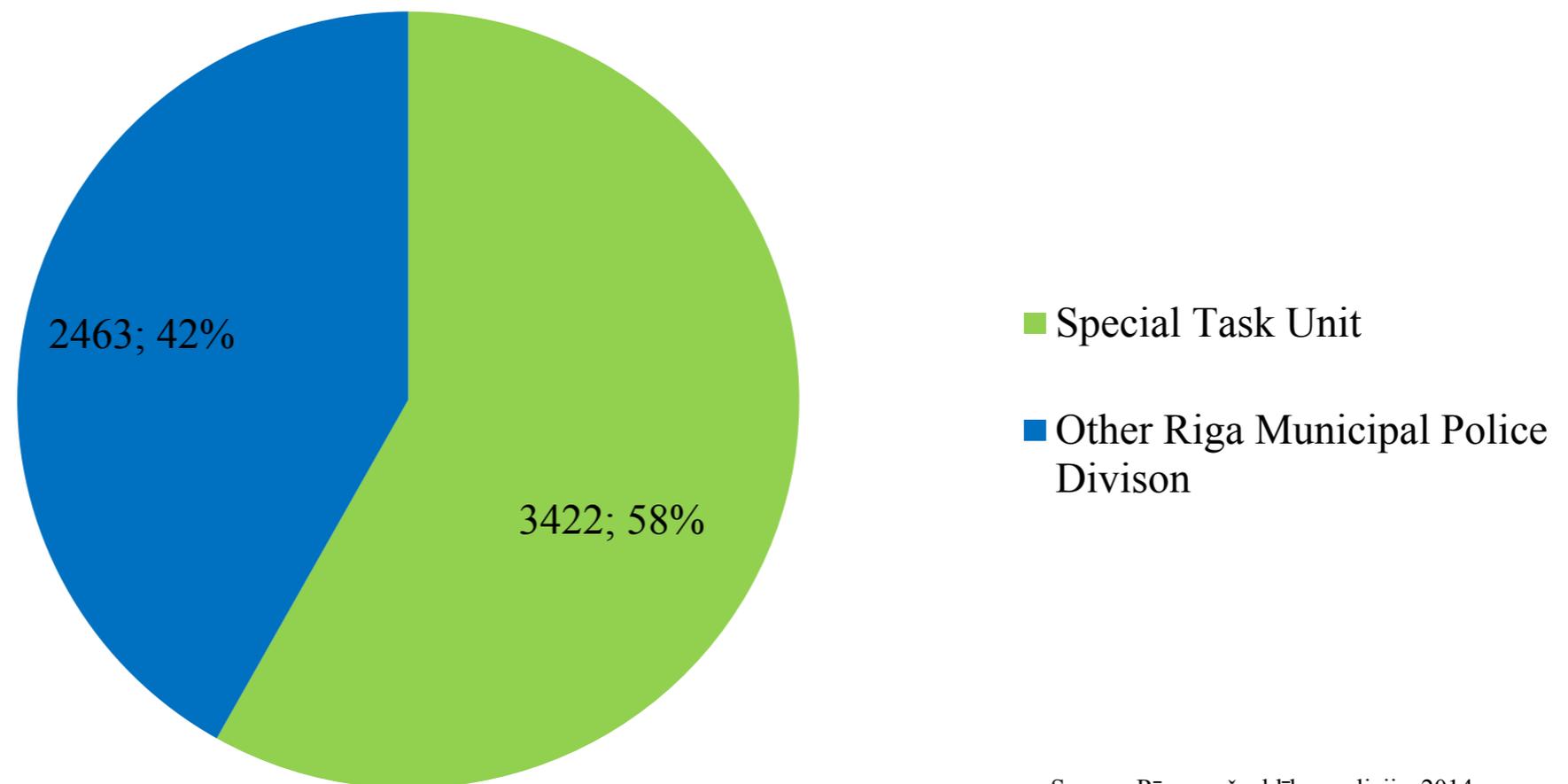
To guarantee fast and precise execution of tasks at hand Special Task Unit is working closely with national law enforcement agencies and other state and local government institutions.





# Riga Municipal Police Special Task Unit (II)

**Number of spice packages removed from stores until April,  
year 2014 (pcs.)**



Source: Rīgas pašvaldības policija, 2014



# Changes in laws



The legislature (Saeima) adopted significant amendments in laws in October of year 2013, when it was determined that spice (new psychoactive substances) storage and marketing can be banned up to 12 months. The temporary ban was based on information provided by the forensic authorities or the information available on the European early warning system.

Unfortunately, changes in the law did not provide immediate results, because liability was not intended for violating the temporary ban. Marketing, storage, handling or manufacture of spice was only criminalized on April 9, year 2014, when most of the spice stores ceased to operate. Administrative liability later was intended for the use of spice and being in a state of spice induced intoxication.



# Spice dealers' resistance to police (I)

Spice traders invented various ways to prevent the removal of spice packages from the stores by the police. It became increasingly popular to install metal door and lattice to ensure that the store cannot be entered by the police and aggressive customers.

Since spice was not prohibited, neither the court nor the prosecutors' office was able to give sanction to take coercive store opening and viewing.

A common technique to hinder police work was writing complaints about frequent police actions in stores. Spice dealers noted that spice is not prohibited, so demanded explanations why is their stock removed from stores by the police.





# Spice dealers' resistance to police(II)

During spice store checks Riga Municipal Police officers had to come across situations where spice dealers behaved aggressively and even threatened them. On December, year 2013, during a spice store inspection, a spice dealer fired at the Riga Municipal Police officers with a gas weapon.

All aggressive violators were detained and prosecuted according to law.

The Riga Municipal Police launched a campaign against spice stores and in November and December of year 2013 each spice store was assigned a police patrol that ensured and prevented customers from buying spice.





# Suspension of spice prevalence

Since April 9, year 2014, changes in the Criminal Law came into effect, which provided criminal liability for spice distribution.

The Riga Municipal Police, in cooperation with the State police Criminal police, during the night of April 8, 2014 to April 9, performed an operation in order to quickly apprehend spice traffickers immediately after the law came into force.

Shortly before midnight, at each of the existing Riga spice stores, police officers were located to observe the situation of spice stores in order to identify trade.

Spice stores after the criminalization of spice did not continue their activities. It was observed in isolated cases, when spice was sold on the streets, but such persons were immediately detained and subjected to criminal proceedings.

Currently, a close cooperation exists between the Riga Municipal Police and the State police Criminal police in the combat against drugs. Information concerning the alleged drug dealers is quickly transferred to the Criminal police for further action.



**Thank you for your attention!**



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