



EU DRUG MARKETS REPORT

A STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

Case study 8

Mobile production units

The manufacture of synthetic drugs mainly takes place in stationary production units, such as farm houses, factories, apartments or sheds. However, a new trend of using mobile production units has been identified during several recent investigations, with the units being subsequently seized. Latest developments to the trend favour using mobile production units which are transported to a site where manufacture can start almost immediately. This saves considerable time as, in the past, stationary units needed to be built, installed and then rendered operational. Such instances are becoming more common.

Seized mobile production units are designed, constructed and used for the:

- manufacture of amphetamine via reductive amination including distillation
- manufacture of MDMA via reductive amination with the use of hydrogen gas and platinum oxide and distillation
- manufacture of (MDMA) tablets with the use of a tableting machine, including mixing, packing and sealing
- manufacture of cannabis in a mobile cannabis nursery.



Sound insulation, air ventilation and a purification system are present inside this mobile tableting unit.
Photo: Europol.



Mobile MDMA production unit with pressure reaction vessel and distillation (front, left); a mobile tableting unit (back, right).
Photo: Europol.

Trailers and trucks are often used for the construction of mobile production units. In most cases, the units are designed, built and installed in a professional manner with the production equipment, including cables and piping, being fitted to the floor, roof or side walls of the trailer or truck. In some mobile tableting units, sound insulation and air purification with both a ventilation system and absorption system (active carbon filter) are installed.

The introduction of mobile units has led to production at various locations for limited periods of time. The low cost and short time needed to set up a professional production unit are attractive and the use of timing devices means that the producer only needs to be physically present during a limited part of the production process.

In all cases, mobile production units can be up and running in a few hours. Often, all they need in order to function is an electricity and water supply. The use of the aforementioned timing devices in some units means that after starting the process (amphetamine or

MDMA production), the producers can leave the unit unattended. The equipment shuts down automatically after a set period of time, which is the time needed to achieve synthesis.

