

Amendment 1: addition of the group of substances of nitazenes to the list of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances

#### 4.1 Social, including demographic effect

##### Effect target audience: users of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances

According to the Public Opinion and Risk Behavior Survey of the Police and Border Guard Board, in 2015 nearly 20 % of the adult population of Estonia had used some drugs at least once in their lifetime.

According to the results of the Health Behaviour Survey of Estonian adults conducted in 2020, 7 % of the respondents aged 16-64 had taken drugs or psychotropic prescription drugs without a doctor's order in the last 12 months and 6 % in the last 30 days. Illegal drugs are also used by school children: more than a third (38 %) of all 15-16-year-old schoolchildren in Estonia say they have used some narcotic drugs.

Thus, based on the results of the studies, the size of the target group can be estimated as an average.

##### Magnitude of the impact, frequency of occurrence, and risk of undesirable effects

Estonia stands out in the European Union by a higher than average prevalence of drug use among schoolchildren aged 15-16.

Up to 2018, Estonia was the first in the European Union in terms of drug overdose-related deaths.

The inclusion in the list of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances of the group of nitazenes is intended to limit their wider distribution and availability as they may pose a serious risk to public health. Nitazenes are not known to have a medical use, they may cause serious harm to health and result in death.

According to the data of the Institute for Health Development (TAI), the number of deaths from drug overdoses increased exponentially in 2022 and, according to information published in January 2023, 38 % of the seventy-nine drug overdose deaths were related to synthetic opioids, namely the nitazene group. The majority of the latter (22) were associated with protonitazene, but in seven cases also with metonitazene and in six cases with isotonitazene. The TAI estimates that more than 50 % of the ninety deaths caused by drug overdoses in 2023 were related to synthetic opioids, namely the nitazene group. As in 2022, protonitazene is ranked first, followed by the use of metonitazene. As regards to the latter, it can be observed that, at present, its use has increased significantly compared to 2022 (and increase from seven to twenty-four). Two other N-desethylisotonitazene uses have been added to these. The risk of death due to overdoses is significantly increased by concomitant use of other drugs.

Although the proportion of deaths caused by the use of substances belonging to the nitazene subgroup of all deaths in Estonia is small (low frequency of effects), taking into account the proportion of the deaths caused by drug overdose this year due to the use of substances belonging to the nitazene subgroup, and the extent to which it has already increased compared to the previous year, the extent and frequency of the impact can still be assessed as average. The risk of undesirable effects arising from listing the substances in the list of prohibited substances is low, since, according to current data, those substances do not have a medical use.