

# Methamphetamine in the Czech Republic



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**SUMMARY:** *The Czech Republic has a relatively long tradition in the addictive and problem use of methamphetamine, which is called “pervitin” locally. This paper attempts to provide as complex a picture of this phenomenon as possible by analyzing what is known about the Czech methamphetamine situation through scientific monitoring and research. It begins with a brief historical overview and then utilizes five key indicators (surveys, treatment demand, problem drug use estimates, blood borne diseases, and mortality) and some of the core indicators (namely, drug related crime, price and purity data, and estimates of market value) of drug epidemiology that were developed by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA). By summarizing and carefully interpreting this data, the specifics of the Czech pervitin scene are described and future research directions are identified.*

**KEY WORDS:** METHAMPHETAMINE – ILLICIT STIMULANTS – HISTORY – TRENDS – USE – PRODUCTION – TRAFFICKING – CZECH REPUBLIC

## ● 1 INTRODUCTION

Methamphetamine, a powerful stimulant drug, was first synthesized from ephedrine under the name “pervitin” by A. Ogata in Japan (Ogata, 1919). Similarly to amphetamine (Benzedrine and Dexedrine<sup>1</sup>), its medical and paramedical use increased in the 1920s and 1930s as well as during World War II, when powerful stimulant drugs were used by

military troops. Amphetamine (commonly known as Benzedrine) was preferred by the Allies,<sup>2</sup> and methamphetamine by the Axis<sup>3</sup> states – primarily Germany<sup>4</sup> and Japan. The first post-war wave of methamphetamine and amphetamine use in civilian populations appeared due to redistribution of the huge war surplus in the U.S. and Europe in the late 1940s. The second wave occurred in the 1950s and

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