



On Monday 10 September 2018, UNRIC hosted a press briefing to present the latest [World Drug Report 2018](#) with Bob Van Den Berghe, Regional Coordinator of the Container Control Programme (CCP) for Latin America and the Caribbean at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The Report highlights, among other things, the various drug use patterns and vulnerabilities among different age and gender groups as well as shifts in the global drug market.

Belgium remains a top destination for drug exports, especially for those coming out of Latin America and the Caribbean, due to direct connections. Last year for example, more than 44 tonnes of cocaine were seized in the ports of Latin America and the Caribbean, of which more than half were destined for Belgium. So far in 2018 alone, 33 tonnes have already been intercepted with more than 10 tonnes destined for Belgium through the port of Antwerp.

As a result, as part of his expert meetings on cooperation programs against drug trafficking with the European Commission on 11 and 12 September, Bob Van den Berghe, helped shed light into the many possible reasons as to why the port of Antwerp, the second largest port of Europe, continues to be a leading port of call for international cocaine trade.

In terms of the CCP, more than 750 million maritime containers are shipped each year with less than 2% being inspected. This means that such a large volume of containers travelling the seas from country to country goes uninspected providing the perfect opportunity for illicit drug trading. This helps explain further why Belgium remains a main transit country for cocaine.

In effect, the cocaine that enters through the port of Antwerp is picked up and further smuggled due to a lack of appropriate verification tools and security. The port of Antwerp is less secure than the port of Rotterdam for example and therefore invites the supply of one third of the world's turnover of cocaine. Van den Berghe explained the practicalities "in Rotterdam you have a closed circuit. If you want to send the containers to the scanner terminal, then these containers cannot leave the container terminal. Whereas in Antwerp, you must leave the container terminal to reach the scanner terminal which is a 10 minutes' drive away. This increases the risk of contamination." Additionally, there is more container port automation in Rotterdam with fewer goods being traded by people unlike in Antwerp.

To help identify, profile, and analyse potential high-risk containers, UNODC wants to establish inter-agency units, composed of police and custom officers, within the maritime ports. And through its CCP Program, UNODC is aiming at strengthening its collaboration with the port of Antwerp and with Belgian authorities as it aims to tackle the criminal networks in the source ports. CCP stands for facilitating trade and preventing contamination of containers. "By stopping illicit goods leaving the source country, we want to come to a point where we conduct less inspections and obtain more results," underlined Van den Berghe.

To prevent a cross-border movement of illicit goods through other trade routes, CCP-Air has also been developed. Supported by the same methodology used for land and seaport cargo, CCP-Air aims to improve cargo security. By establishing inter-agency units at international airports, UNODC will now tackle the smuggling of substances and misuse of air transport as international drug trafficking becomes increasingly more difficult to trace and prevent.