

Thinking of Holland.....?



Special features of the Dutch drug policy

- Cannabis policy
- Medicinal cannabis
- Medical heroin prescription



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Drug policy: general (1)

Basic Assumptions of Dutch drug policy:

- drug use can not be eradicated, but can be controlled;
- criminalization of drug users worsens the problem;
- interventions by governments have limited results;
- public health interest most important.

Core objective of Dutch drug policy:

Protection of the health of individual, the immediate environment and society, by

- preventing drug use and treat and rehabilitate drug users
- reducing harm to users
- combat production and trafficking of drugs
- reduction of public nuisance by drug users

Drug policy: general (2)

- Netherlands : pragmatic and rational drug policy
- Special (Dutch) criminal justice principle:
Criminal investigation and prosecution operate under the so-called 'expediency principle' or principle of discretionary powers (*opportuiniteitsbeginsel*).
- *General notion: no direct connection between drug policy and drug use in a country*

Cannabis policy (1)

- Before **1960s** only opiates and cocaine use in sub-cultural groups
- Dilemma policy makers concerning huge cannabis use middle class youth in 1960s
- **1976**: amendment of Opium Act: List I: substances with 'unacceptable risks' (harddrugs) and List II: substance with 'acceptable risks' (in particular cannabis -softdrugs)



Cannabis policy (2)

- **1969**: First cannabis guidelines of Public Prosecution Service



- **1977**: prosecution of retail cannabis trade decided by local tripartite consultation (mayor, local public prosecutor & head of police); (decentralisation of cannabis policy)
- **1980**: Official guideline by Public Prosecution Service:
→ *NO LEGALIZATION!*
- **1987**: First national guideline with conditions for *coffeeshops*

Cannabis policy (3)

- **1991:** National guidelines for *coffeeshops* (AHOJ-G criteria): no Advertising, no Hard drugs, no Public nuisance, no sale to Minors, maximum sale of 30 Grams
- **1995/96:** Policy Paper 'Continuity and Change': first comprehensive drug strategy
 - Regulation of *coffeeshops*
 - Combating organised crime
 - Combating drug tourism
- **2000:** policy paper on possibilities for 'regulated' supply of *coffeeshops*: no experiments



Cannabis policy (4)



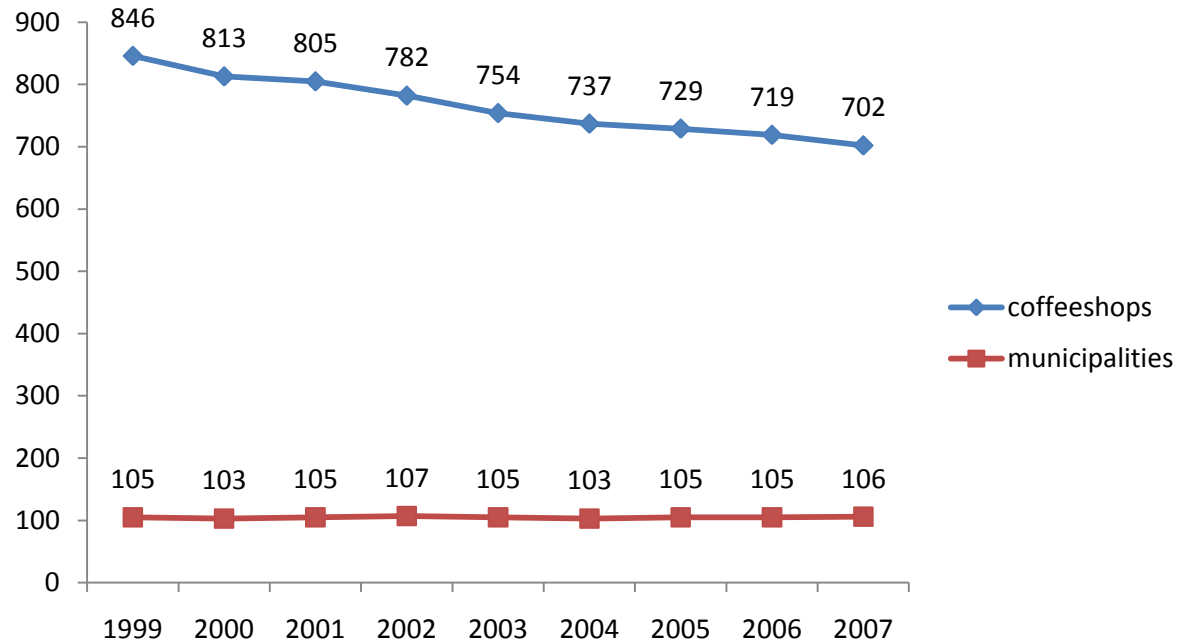
- **2004:** Policy paper on **cannabis policy:**
 - National Action Plan to Discourage Cannabis Use
 - Intensified enforcement of laws and regulations on cannabis
 - Curbing coffeeshop tourism
 - Tougher action against large scale cannabis cultivation

- **2009: Evaluation of drug policy from 1976 - 2009:**
 - separation of markets: outcome achieved ;
 - marginalisation: outcome achieved: normalisation of cannabis (and XTC!) use;
 - public nuisance: unforeseen complicated: criminalisation of production;
 - drug tourism: difficult to find solutions

- **2010:** new government -> closed *coffeeshops* ??

Cannabis policy (5)

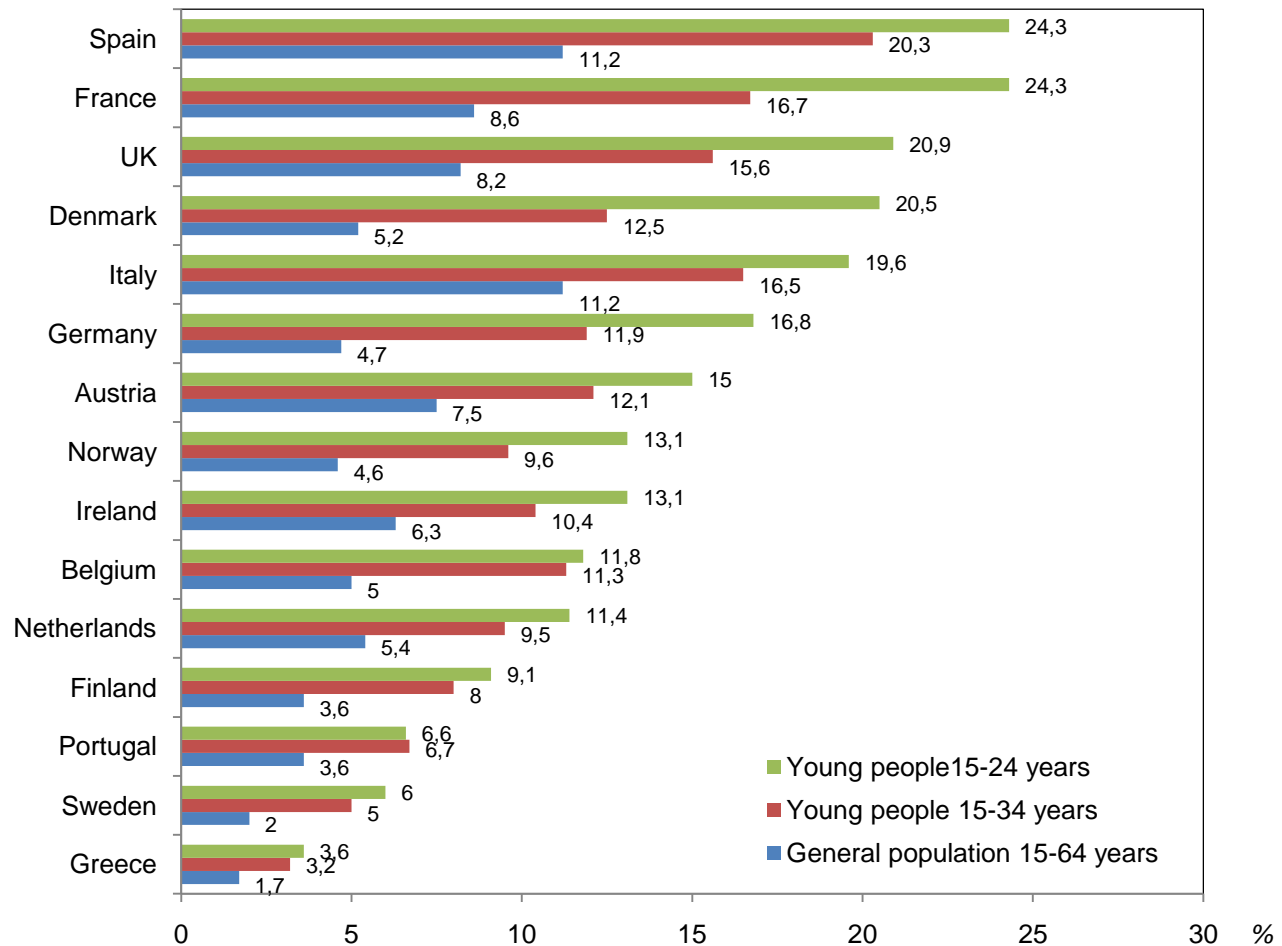
Number of coffeeshops and number of municipalities with coffeeshops in the Netherlands, 1999-2007



- Amsterdam: 229 coffeeshops
- 75% of municipalities: no coffeeshops
- Also many illegal cannabis outlets

Cannabis policy (6)

Last year cannabis use among general population (15-64 yr), and youth and young adults of 15-24 yr and 15-34 yr in EU-15 + Norway



Medicinal cannabis production (1)

Special feature of Dutch drug policy:

Since 2001: **Office of Medicinal Cannabis (OMC)**:

<http://www.cannabisbureau.nl/en/>

Objective: to develop cannabis of constant pharmaceutical quality for

- a. clinical research
- b. delivery to patients with e.g. cancer, AIDS and MS via pharmacies
- c. stimulate pharmaceutical industry to develop high quality medicine based on cannabis

Medicinal cannabis production (2)

- Since 2003: guaranteed quality of medicinal cannabis delivered to pharmacies in three variants

Situation in 2009:

- instead of expected 10,000 patients only 550 patients use prescribed medicinal cannabis;
- still no registered cannabis medicine;
- Dutch medicinal cannabis exported to Finland, Germany and Italy

Medical heroin prescription (1)

Since 2009: in the Netherlands is heroin (diamorfine) officially registered as a medicine

First initiative: policy paper of 1995 (after good results in Switzerland)

In 1998: start of scientific Randomized Clinical Trial (RCT) with groups of heroin + methadone users vs methadone alone users.

Medical heroin prescription (2)

Results of RCT:

heroin assisted patients function significantly better on all indicators
+ cost-effective (because of decrease of criminal activities) !

2009: 715 treatment places for medical heroin prescription
operational at 17 units in 15 different municipalities

Conclusions

- Separation of markets successful
- Cannabis policy has become stricter
- Drug policy decentralised
- Unique cannabis and heroin treatments