

Press Release

Prague welcomes the EU National Drug Coordinators. The topic is cannabis policy.

Vobořil: Democratic states are gradually going down the path of decriminalizing people who use cannabis. This is based on conviction, but also scientific evidence.

PRAGUE, 7.9.2022 - Decriminalisation and destigmatization of people who use drugs, accessible healthcare, human rights, and harm reduction. These topics were discussed at the EU National Drug Coordinators Meeting in Prague, organized by the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

*"Forty percent of people under the age of thirty-five have experience of cannabis in the EU and prohibition cannot prevent this. Around two million people in the EU use cannabis regularly. At the same time, half of all criminal drug offenses are cannabis-related. It will be difficult, but decriminalization and more emphasis on prevention and the regulated legal market is the way how we can move forward," says the **National Drug Coordinator, Jindřich Vobořil**, adding: "I am convinced that this is something that cannot be stopped. Countries that will step forward to the legal regulation on cannabis will have a better chance to do it carefully."*

Freeing up the cannabis market is a topic we need to open. Prohibition has several unintended effects. *"Prohibition of human behaviour, enforced by criminal law, is always an extreme effort and does not seem to bring enough benefits. The main objective should be to improve the health of societies and individuals. Public money should be more focused on prevention and assistance. Unfortunately, 80% of the money in drug policies still goes into repression."* explains Vobořil.

A controlled market, on the other hand, can offer many more tools of control, as some effective policies on legal drugs have already shown. Prohibition, which involves prosecuting anyone who possesses large quantities (10 grams or more) of cannabis, actually means almost the only tool of control - criminal proceedings. The police have to produce evidence of a crime and then a prison sentence is imposed. The system assumes that this will deter the majority from the cannabis use, however this system of deterrence is failing.

There are other important benefits to the regulated cannabis market model. Apart from a significant reduction in the black market, the collection of significant tax money (in the Czech Republic we estimate several billion crowns, Germany for example talks about five billion Euros in taxes), or the end of production and sales by criminal groups from whose hands other substances or weapons, the sex trade, etc. A controlled market, on the other hand, offers

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many more tools. We are better able to control sales to under-18s, the places of sale, the percentage of the active substance, who sells the substance, and also who manufactures it.

The annual meeting of the EU National drug coordinators is organized by the country holding the Presidency of the Council of the EU. Therefore, National Drug coordinators from all the EU Member States, together with representatives of EU agencies and institutions, and also experts from international and non-profit organizations, met in Prague.

This conference was organized by the Department of Drug Policy at the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic together with the National Drug Coordinator Jindřich Vobořil.

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