

**(DECRIMINALISATION OF)**

**DRUG USE IN THE  
NETHERLANDS**

**5 NOVEMBER 2020**

**MAINLINE**

# DUTCH DRUG POLICY

- Developed in the 1970s
- Aim is to control and reduce drug related societal issues (health and public safety)
- Key words: pragmatic, humane, realistic and evidence-based
- 4 pillars to improve public health:
  - Information
  - Prevention
  - Drug treatment
  - Harm reduction

LESSONS FOR DRUG POLICY SERIES

## Coffee Shops and Compromise

Separated Illicit Drug Markets  
in the Netherlands



# KEY MESSAGES

- Possession, trafficking and production of drugs are illegal in the Netherlands
- The use of drugs is not illegal > no penalties
- The law distinguishes soft drugs from hard drugs – substances are listed based on their impact on health
- Coffeeshops are tolerated from the perspective of public health





# USER QUANTITIES

Possession of drugs in the Netherlands is illegal, but the law provides a definition for 'user quantities':

- < 5 grams of soft drugs (e.g. hash or weed)
- Max ½ gram of hard drugs (e.g. heroine, cocaine, meth)
- Max 1 xtc pill
- < 5 ml GHB

User quantities may be confiscated by the police: there is no fine/penalty and the person does not get a criminal record.

Possession of bigger quantities is considered 'possession with the intend to sell'/drug dealing and will be prosecuted.

# RECENT DEBATE

- With the Netherlands as one of the key producers of xtc, cannabis and meth in the world, the country being an important 'hub' for the international cocaine and heroine trade and some of its inhabitants being major players on the drug trade on the dark web, Dutch drug policy is under pressure.
- A recent report by a think tank on drug-related organised crime stated: 'because of the Dutch focus on harm reduction, we lost sight of organised crime'.
- Pre-Corona the debate about further regulation of illicit substance flared up, but now died down again.





# RECENT CONFUSION

- ‘The use of soft drugs can cause civilians to ignore the Corona-rules and should therefore be forbidden (at night)’
- A motion was accepted in Dutch Parliament (14 October 2020) to allow law enforcement to fine/penalise people who use soft drugs at night (in public spaces)
- ‘The possession of soft drugs is technically illegal and therefore also its use’

# CONTACT

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## Poppi: Drugs Museum Amsterdam

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- Facebook: [@poppi.amsterdam](https://www.facebook.com/poppi.amsterdam)
- Instagram: [@poppi.amsterdam](https://www.instagram.com/poppi.amsterdam)
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