

GAMBLING AND MARIJUANA USE IN THE NETHERLANDS: IS LEGALIZATION THE BEST TOOL FOR DEALING WITH “NAUGHTY HABITS?”

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Taking

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1976 Netherlands

- Two Policy Initiatives Were Embraced
 - One in response to a wave of illegal gaming
 - One in response to increases in the public's use of illegal drugs, especially marijuana





Legalization of Casinos in the Netherlands

To Gain Parliamentary Support:

- The new gambling product would not be linked to the existing influences of the illegal gambling.
- A new governmental corporation would be formed.
- Casinos could not be in major cities, but in three resort communities.
- Casinos could not hire any personnel associated with illegal gambling establishments.

The New Government Casinos

- ❑ Afternoon and Evening hours
- ❑ Identifications had to be given at door
- ❑ Fee charged at the door
- ❑ Coats and ties for men
- ❑ No slot machines
- ❑ No complimentary services
- ❑ No credit to gamblers
- ❑ Advertising was restricted



1976 Drug Reform Law

- A major point was to distinguish between hard drugs (schedule I) such as heroin, cocaine, and LSD, and soft drugs (schedule II) such as marijuana (cannabis)
- People could cultivate up to 5 grams by oneself
- People could smoke in coffee shops (the kind where no coffee is served!)

HASH

	P/GR
ICEOLATOR	20.00
ROYAL DUTCH SKUFF	15.00
SUPER POLM	9.40
POLM	7.60
KETAMA	4.00
NEPAL	8.00
AFGAAN	4.80

MARIJUANA

	P/GR
SILVER HAZE	12.00
AMNESIA	11.20
BLUE CHEESE	11.00
CHOCOLOPA	11.00
SOUR T	10.00
SWISS CHEESE	10.00
AK 47	10.00
WHITE WIDOW	8.50
ORANGE BUD	8.00
THAI	4.20



PRE-ROLLED JOINTS

HAZE	5.00
PURE W.W.	4.00
WHITE WIDOW	3.50
SKUNK	3.00
THAI	3.00
MIX	4.00
SUPER POLM	3.50
POLM	3.00

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The Newly Legalized Coffee Shops

- Licensed by local governments
- License document had to be displayed in window
- Enforcement powers to local police and court authorities
- The house could only stock 500 grams of product.
- Customers had to be 16 years old (age was raised to 18 in 1996)
- Customers were allowed to smoke marijuana on site and could take up to 30 grams to go (this was amended to 5 grams in 1995).
- Alcohol was not permitted at the houses

Coffee Houses



- Initially located on back streets
- 9 houses in Amsterdam in 1980
- 71 houses in 1985
- Over 100 houses in 1988 with more prominent locations
- In the early 1990s, as many as 1500 houses existed across The Netherlands.
- 1996 regulations were reformed with strengthened rules.
- Today approximately 680 houses exist.

The Different Roads of The Policies

The Casinos

- ❑ Instead of quashing illegal gambling, the opposite happened.
- ❑ The proliferation of Golden Tens
- ❑ By 1985, the government gained a sense of its errors surrounding casino policy.

Marijuana

- ❑ There is general agreement that good results have been obtained.
- ❑ Consumption patterns have changed over the years: waned in the 1980s, increased in the 90s, but then stabilized after reform changes of 1995.

The Separation of Markets

- Marijuana was no longer viewed as a gateway drug to heroin use (or harder drug use)
- Those wanting marijuana no longer had to go to illegal suppliers with incentives to sell larger quantities and harder drugs.
- An early study in 1983 found that heroin consumption in the Netherlands had declined 30% since 1976.

A NEW LAW IS PROPOSED

The New Law

- Proposed in 2011 by the Coalition of the Liberal and Christian Democrat parties (conservative parties)
- Won majority vote in the Parliament in 2012
- Took effect for 3 southern Netherlands provinces on April 27, 2012 and was to be implemented nationally on January 1, 2013

The New Law (continued)

- ❑ Bans all foreigners from coming into the houses.
- ❑ People will now have to show identifications and will have to have their names recorded
- ❑ Houses will be like clubs with a total number of members limited to 2000.

May 2012 Study

- 14 coffee houses in Central Amsterdam were visited
- 28 interviews made with 19 customers and 9 employees
- Customers were natives of 9 countries (America, Switzerland, France, Brazil, Germany, Slovakia, Algeria, Chile, Malaysia, and Holland)
- 7 customers were female, 12 were male
- 2 employees were female, 7 were male
- Ages ranged from 19 to 52 years old, with an average age of 27
- Eleven customers reported using marijuana daily, two at least weekly, and the others less often

**Respondents were asked if they were aware of the impending legal changes.
(All replied that they were.)**

Respondents were also asked about their opinions of the impending legal changes and whether or not they believed they would change their personal consumption.

Some of the Comments:

Reduce my consumption? Not at all.

How the hell can you forbid a tourist from using marijuana? If I can't buy it in a coffee shop, I'll buy it in the streets."

"Nothing will change."

"I'll keep on smoking, maybe I'll even make a few bucks."

"I won't be hanging out in coffee shops anymore. Now I'll have to do something illegal to get it."

"We'll just go back to the old days—buying it from someone you know."

A resident user said he would not be coming to the shops under the new regulations, claiming “I do not like to be labeled as a smoker. Another stated angrily, “I don’t want a stamp on my head that says I’m a user.”

The employees offered several views:

One commented that the new rules “will affect business negatively.”

“I think it will be real bad. They are already really strict. The business is based upon tourism, and many coffee shops will be really harmed by this.”

“Usually if you make things less accessible, it makes it more fun. America is one of the heaviest prohibitionist countries and has some of the heaviest marijuana use.”

“I’m 100% positive it won’t affect anything.”

One stated “the government will lose so much money.” (It should be added that about \$400 million (Euros) worth of marijuana is sold each year in the shops, but there is no direct tax on the sales, and European courts have ruled that the VAT may not be applied to the sales. The coffee shops do furnish several millions of Euros to government in business taxes, but this is not considered a major tax contribution.(61)

Other employees agreed with their customers, one saying, “the tourists will still come. They’ll just buy it on the streets. More dealers will be standing on the streets.”

“More business will go underground...It will just go back to the black market.”

“It will definitely boost criminality,” was one’s remarks, while another offered, **“I think there will be more crime in the streets. A lot of people will grow it themselves and sell it...People are still going to buy it and support criminals. In fact, there will be more criminals, and they won’t be concerned whether someone is eighteen years old or not.”**

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