

Small scale cannabis cultivation and cannabis social clubs in Belgium

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Cannabis. Par-delà l'interdit – Brussel

10 December 2015

Media and political discourse on cannabis markets

- Large scale plantations
- Indoor cultivation
- In the north and north east of Flanders (close to the Dutch borders)
- With commercial intent
- 'Professionally' equipped plantations
- To supply the Dutch market (coffeeshops)
- Stimulated by Dutch know-how and by Dutch policy

a biased picture

a superficial analysis

Typology of cannabis growers

Medicinal growers				Therapeutic use
Personal growers	'Communal growers'	Small homegrowers	Personal use Better quality Hobby Avoiding illegal circuit	
Social growers			For friends Social rewards	
Social-commercial growers	'Pragmatists'	Large independent commercial home growers	Additional income Economical necessities	
		Single homegrowers working for commissioners		
Commercial growers	'Hustlers'	Entrepreneurial largescale producers	Profit Entrepreneurs, business	
		Organisers of entrepreneurial growing		
Hough et al. (2003)	Weisheit (1992)	Bovenkerk (2002)	Motives	

Some elementary scientific findings

- **Prohibition is ineffective (cfr. Goals of cannabis policy)**
- **Prohibition is criminogenic**
- **Prohibition has a negative impact on public health**
- **Prohibition is not cost-effective and not evidence based ('fact free politics')**
- **Waterbed-effects / balloon-effects**
- **Policy measures must be evaluated in their effects on ALL segments of the market**
- **From a public health perspective regulation of the cannabis market is the best option**

Barrières voor een debat over alternatieven

- Legaliseren en reguleren betekent niet
 - laissez faire en commercialiseren,
 - Een morele aanmoediging,
- Ons uitgangspunt: hoe kunnen we op de meest effectieve wijze druggebruik verminderen
- Repressieve methode is niet de meest effectieve
- en creëert enorm veel “collateral damage”
- Er bestaat een betere methode

Barrières voor een debat over alternatieven

- **‘Het cannabisverbod beschermt jonge of kwetsbare mensen’**
- **‘Cannabis is ondertussen een hard drug geworden’**
- **‘Cannabis zal spotgoedkoop worden’**
- **‘De georganiseerde misdaad laat zich niet verdrijven’**
- **‘Cannabisgebruik zal onbeheersbaar worden’**
- **‘Internationale verdragen staan het niet toe’**
- **‘Internationale consensus nodig’**
- **‘Ervaringen in andere landen zijn negatief’**
- **...**

Regulation: a variety of options

- **Productie:**

Achtergrond & expertise van producent, kweektechnieken en –omstandigheden, toegestane verwerkings- of bewerkingsprocedures, maximale productiecapaciteit, kwaliteitscontrole van het eindproduct, traceerbaarheid van illegale cannabis,

- **Wijze waarop cannabisproducten beschikbaar mogen zijn**

Standaarddosering, toegelaten plantvariëteiten, maximale sterkte (THC, CBD, CBN, etc.), kwaliteitsnormen, verplichtingen inzake verpakking en bijsluiting, beschikbaarheid van verschillende cannabisproducten, verbod op reclame, 'branding' etc,

- **Prijzenpolitiek**

Taksen en rechtstreeks prijsbepalingen, daling van de middelen die in handen van professionele criminelen komen, meerinkomsten kunnen ingezet worden voor reductie van de vraag, ...

- **Regulering van de distributie- of verkooppunten:**

Inplanting en dichtheid van verkooppunten, responsabiliseren van verkopers, sanctioneren van verkopers die zich niet aan de regels houden, eisen opleggen aan verkopers, systeem van rantsoenering, verplichte bedenktijd, ...

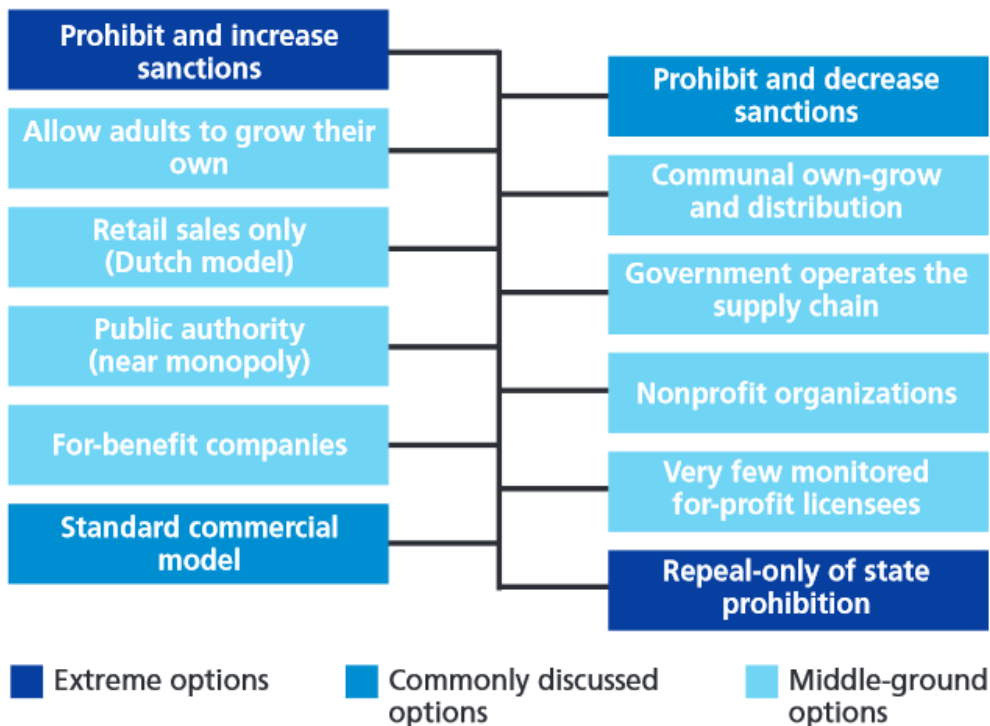
- **Regulering van de gebruikers:**

Minimum leeftijd, persoonlijk vergunningensysteem, ingezetencriterium, sociale clubmodel, beperking van het aantal plaatsen waar gebruikt mag worden,

CSCs as one alternative model for the supply of cannabis

- Not a binary choice between prohibition and the commercial model (e.g. Colorado, Washington)
- CSCs as a middle-ground option

Twelve Supply Alternatives to Status Quo Prohibition



RAND PE149-1

From: Caulkins et al. (2015). *Options and issues regarding marijuana legalization*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation.

Models of regulation

- **Het repressieve model (strafrechtelijke model; de 'war on drugs')**
- **Het commerciële model**
- **Het coffeeshop-model (het Nederlandse model)**
- **Medicinale marihuana modellen**
- **Het Alaska-model**
- **De 'cannabis social clubs'**

What are CSCs?

- (Legal) associations of cannabis users
- Collective cultivation of cannabis, in a private space
- Non-profit
- Limited amounts, covering personal consumption by its (registered) members
- For adults
- For people who are cannabis users prior to membership
- For recreational and/or medical use



CSCs in Europe: different contexts and practices (?)

- Spain: 400-600 CSCs
- Belgium: 5-10 CSCs
- Slovenia: 'Cannabis Social Club Maribor'
- The Netherlands: 'The Three of Life' (Amsterdam), initiative by the city of Utrecht
- France: Fédération des CSC (CSCF) – 'Les amis de CSCF' (?)
- United Kingdom: UKCSC (working closely with NORML UK) (?)
- Switzerland: 'Die Grüne Blume' (medical CSC, 2006) (?)
- Italy: 'laPiantiamo' (?)



An overview of CSCs in Belgium

	CSC Trekt uw Plant	CSC Mambo Social Club	CSC WeedOut	CSC MaWeedPerso	CSC Sativa	CSC The Herb Club	CSC MCC	CSC Peace
Location	Antwerp	Hasselt	Andenne	Liège	Namur	Antwerp	Lier	Liège
Date of foundation	2006	2013	2013	2013	2013	2013	2015	?
Number of members	N = 237	N = 84	N = 13	N = 35	N = 81	N=75	N=30	?
Waiting list	N = 25	N = 233	N = 5	No	N = 30	No	No	?
Minimum age	18 yrs	18 yrs (M) / 21 yrs (R)	18 yrs (M)/ 21 yrs (R)	21 yrs	18 yrs	18 yrs	18 yrs	?
Membership fee (per year)	25 Euro	25 Euro	25 Euro	25 Euro	25 Euro	25 Euro	25 Euro	?
Price per gram	7 or 8 Euro	7 Euro	6 Euro	7 Euro	6,05 Euro	?	6,5 Euro	?
Max. consumption	60 gr. / 2 months	15 gr. / 6 weeks	20 gr./ month	40 gr./ 2 months	Not decided yet	50 gr./ month	?	?
Currently in operation	Yes	Yes	No (?)	No (?)	No (?)	Yes	Yes (MEDCAN, HGC Academy)	?

The cannabis social club model

Strengths / opportunities

- No profit
- Control over potency, quality and production techniques?
- Weakening the black market (criminal entrepreneurs)
- Export (drug tourism)
- No redistribution among non members (minor) and no drug tourism (cf. some Barcelona clubs)
- Only for adults : not available too easy and not leading to more consumption
- Creation of legal economy and tax revenues
- More democratic than multinationals
- Facilitates prevention and treatment

Weaknesses / Threats

- Transparency
- Lack of legal protection and control
- Lack of professionalization
- No separation of recreational and medicinal use
- Unstable, volatile character of clubs
- Systemic violence against clubs
- Shadow clubs (fronts for dealers)
- Criminalisation by government and crime fighters
- Resentment against registration

The best of many worlds?

- **Lessons to be learned from relevant control regimes (farmaceutical drugs, tobacco, alcohol)**
- **Separate systems for recreational and medicinal users**
- **Alaska model: 'grow your own', but realistically!**
- **regulated (controlled) cannabis social club model: between prohibition and over-commercialisation**
- **Consistently regulated (controlled) non-commercial coffeeshop model (BIGH LB criteria?)**

Thank you!

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