







# What European countries have legalized cannabis?

## European Countries where cannabis is legalized

A perennial issue, whether or not governments should move toward legalizing drugs seems to be an active and ongoing debate among many of the EU's members. More importantly, the stance of viewing drug use and its associated problems as a treatable social issue instead of a criminal issue is gaining in popularity. The 'war on drugs' is not working out as planned.

For example, as law enforcement and customs officials in the UK are increasingly beginning to accept that only a small fraction of drugs (arguably less than 10%) are being stopped from entering the country, the debate continues toward treatment for its estimated 250,000 hardcore addicts rather than criminal punishment is a radical, yet progressive proposal.

Here are a few examples of countries in the European Union (EU) with specific drug policies:

1. Portugal:
  - Portugal decriminalized the possession and use of small quantities of drugs, including cannabis, heroin, and cocaine, in 2001. Instead of facing criminal charges, individuals found with small amounts of drugs are referred to a "Dissuasion Commission" where they may receive a fine, education, or treatment, depending on the circumstances.
2. Netherlands:
  - The Netherlands has a policy of "tolerance" towards the possession and sale of small amounts of cannabis. While cannabis is not technically legal, it is widely available through licensed coffeeshops. The sale and possession of other drugs remain illegal.
3. Spain:
  - Spain has a decentralized approach to drug policy, and several regions have adopted more lenient measures towards personal drug use, particularly with regard to cannabis. In regions like Catalonia, the possession of small amounts of cannabis for personal use is tolerated.
4. Czech Republic:
  - The Czech Republic has decriminalized the possession of small amounts of drugs for personal use. Possession of less than 15 grams of cannabis or small amounts of other drugs is considered an administrative offense, resulting in a fine.
5. Luxembourg:
  - Luxembourg has announced plans to legalize the recreational use of cannabis, making it the first country in the European Union to do so. The exact implementation and regulations are still being finalized.

These policies have various motivations, which may include a focus on harm reduction, public health, and redirecting resources towards treatment and prevention rather than criminalization.

In Europe, the approach to drug legislation varies significantly among member states, with some nations taking bold steps toward decriminalization and legalization, particularly of cannabis. The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) plays a crucial role in providing comprehensive data and analysis on drug use and its implications across the continent. Their annual European Drug Report outlines trends and developments, influencing policymakers in their approach to drug regulation.

Portugal is often cited as a pioneering country in drug policy reform. In 2001, it took the radical step to decriminalize the possession of small amounts of drugs for personal use, aiming to address drug use as a public health issue rather than a criminal one. This move has not only

