

Summary of Drugs & Democracy Activities

NEWSLETTER

October - December 2013



In December 2013 we had undoubtedly the biggest news of the last few decades concerning drug policy: [Uruguay became the first country](#) in the world to adopt a law regulating the production, sale and consumption of cannabis throughout the national territory. Amidst heated debate, the project was approved on July 31, 2013 by the Chamber of Deputies, and on December 10, 2013 by the Senate. A few days later President [José Mujica formally enacted the law](#) that will regulate the cannabis market. Meanwhile, the states of Colorado and Washington in the United States developed their cannabis regulations that will come into effect on [1 January](#) 2014 and will allow the cultivation, sale and consumption of cannabis for recreational purposes.

2013 will be remembered as the year that the world, having experienced the failure of punitive drug strategies, wisely began to try new approaches. [TNI is proud to have contributed](#) to this process with our [events](#), [research](#) and dissemination of information that sought to show that a paradigm shift in drug policies is possible.

"The current drug policy is *disastrous*. *Doing nothing is not an option anymore... A society without drugs is a utopia*. It's better to regulate the existing market than leave it to organised crime", [says Julio Calzada](#), one of the architects of the Uruguayan drug revolution. ([Reason.com](#))

EVENTS



From 7 till 18 October TNI's Drugs and Democracy Programme hosted and organised a Latin American Fellowship training program on communication and drug policy reform for four Latin Americans professionals working in different policy areas. Over two weeks they received training by D&D researchers, academic experts and activists experienced Dutch drug policy first hand and participated in communication and advocacy training. The training was initiated and funded by the Open

Society Foundation, and part of a collaboration between the London based NGO Release, the Harm Reduction Coalition from New York, and TNI. Our four students came from Colombia, Costa Rica and Brazil.



30 October – TNI and the Epicurus Foundation organised a conference in Utrecht about how to move forward Dutch cannabis policy. The event, “The [Transparent Chain](#)”, brought together about 200 Dutch politicians, local authorities, lawyers, activists and entrepreneurs from the coffeeshop branch. Three people from abroad deeply involved in the regulation initiatives in Uruguay and the United States delivered comments.

From 31 October to 1 November, TNI organised a seminar on the [Costs and Benefits of Cannabis Regulation Models in Europe](#), as part of a European Commission funded series of expert seminars on drug policy innovation in Europe. A group of about thirty experts participated from different European countries and intergovernmental agencies, and from Morocco, Mexico, Uruguay and the USA. The objective of this seminar was to identify and map existing and possible future cannabis regulation models in Europe, look at the local, provincial and national jurisdiction levels and the potential impact of different models on the illicit cannabis market. The costs and benefits of different existing or proposed regulation models – such as the coffeeshop model in the Netherlands, proposed hash shops in Denmark, cannabis social clubs in Spain (notably the regulation of these clubs in Catalonia and Basque country), initiatives for cannabis regulation tabled in various parliaments and the approved licensing systems in Uruguay, Colorado and Washington state were explored and compared.

On 5th November, Martin Jelsma attended the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) intersessional meeting in Vienna, focused on the preparation of discussions at the High Level segment in 2014 and UNGASS 2016.



8-12 November, Pien Metaal traveled to Aguascalientes (Mexico) to attend a two day meeting at the Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE) of the Latin American Research Collective on Drugs and Law CEDD, to discuss the outcomes of the third round of research on “**State responses to drugs consumption**”. Eight Latin American researchers will contribute a paper analyzing the legal position of drug users in their country. Several publications in Spanish on this issue will be launched in March 2014. A public meeting was organized by CIDE’s drugs programme the following day.

10-11 November: Tom Kramer participated as a speaker and resource person at a GIZ/BMZ (German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development)-UNODC Expert Group Meeting “Outreach to new stakeholders in the field of Alternative Development” in Berlin. The meeting was attended by representatives of countries that would like to become involved in discussions on Alternative Development, including China, India, Russia, and Nigeria. Representatives from countries where AD programmes have been implemented, such as Thailand, Myanmar, Afghanistan and Morocco were also present to share experiences and lessons learned. The outcomes of the meeting will be published in March 2014 at the CND.



On November 11, the University of Amsterdam student organization (Studentenvereniging voor Internationale Belangen - SIB) hosted a debate on the War on Drugs at the Crea Theater in Amsterdam. [Tom Blickman was interviewed as the special guest](#) of the evening.

15 November – Martin Jelsma traveled to Brussels to speak at a closed seminar organized by the Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum (CPPF) in collaboration with the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA) that examined the European experiences regarding the impact of the drugs trade and international crime. Special attention was given to the preparations for the 2016 United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on drugs and the role that could be played by the new UN Task Force on Transnational Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking co-chaired by DPA and UNODC.



18-21 November – Pien Metaal was invited to Ecuador to speak at the "Primer encuentro internacional por una política y legislación alternativa a la guerra contra las drogas" (First international meeting for an alternative drug policy and legislation to the war on drugs), a well-organized and well attended (700 people) meeting, initiated by the [Defensoría Pública](#). The participants included political authorities, several ministers (Interior and Health), people from the judicial system and academics. [The agenda](#) focused on the negative consequences of the application of [Law 108](#): labeled by experts as one of the most disproportional drug laws in the region; analysis of data on drug consumption prevalence and prison population. Speakers from abroad emphasized the failure of the existing prohibition model in

their countries and applauded the paradigm shift in Ecuador, where a soon to be approved new Criminal Code will deal in a progressive manner with the drugs market. The president of Congress, and Alexis Mera, Rafael Correa's main advisor, all spoke in favour of health-focused drug policies. Pien Metaal also met with cannabis activists who are in the process of creating a first cannabis club, and had a formal meeting at CONSEP (the National Drugs Agency).

25-26 November, the German Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and TNI in collaboration with the Thai Office of the Narcotics Control Board (ONCB) organised a workshop **'Implementing the UN Guiding Principles on Alternative Development in Southeast Asia' in Bangkok, Thailand**. The workshop looked at the key challenges and opportunities to implement these guidelines on alternative development (AD) in Southeast Asia. The workshop provided a platform for sharing experiences and best practices from Latin America and from the region itself, and for discussion on the future of AD in Southeast Asia. It was attended by government officials, NGO representatives and drug policy and rural development experts from Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, China and India, and from international agencies.



27-28 November, TNI organized in collaboration with GIZ and the ONCB the 5th Southeast Asia Informal Drug Policy Dialogue on **'Drugs and Development in Southeast Asia' in Bangkok**. Specific attention was paid on how to implement alternative development programmes in conflict areas, and how to involve affected communities in policy making and implementation. There was also a discussion on the state of drug law reform efforts in the region and the scaling up of harm reduction, and recent developments in international drug policy. This included key drug policy issues relevant for the region related to the mid-term review of the 2009 Political Declaration at the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) in March 2014, preparations for which started in September 2013, and the UNGASS on drugs which will take place in 2016. The meeting was attended by government officials, NGO representatives and drug policy and rural development experts from Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, China, Malaysia, India, Cambodia and Vietnam and from international agencies.

December 5 – 7. Martin Jelsma attended the [Conference on Illicit Drugs in the North East: Searching for Truth and Solutions](#), organised by: [Institute for Narcotics Studies and Analysis](#) funded by the Government of India at [Don Bosco Institute](#), Kharguli Hills, Guwahati.

PUBLICATIONS

[Human Rights and drug policy. Drug control should respect human rights](#) – Web Primer, by Ernestien Jensema. October 2013

[Majority of the Dutch favour cannabis legalization](#), article by Tom Blickman – October 4, 2013

[Human rights and drug control: an irreconcilable contradiction?](#) Article by Ernestien Jensema, October 15, 2013

[Alternativas a la prohibición de las drogas en Colombia. ¿Presentaron los foros sobre drogas realmente alternativas a la prohibición en Colombia?](#), article by Colombia consultant Ricardo Vargas, October 21, 2013

Tom Blickmann, Martin Jelsma and associate fellow Dave Bewley-Taylor drafted a paper on cannabis [[Rise and Decline? History of cannabis in the UN drug control system and options for reform](#)] and the conventions to feed into the expert seminar held on 31 October-1st November. The paper has been peer reviewed by some of the participants of the seminar, and it is the basis of a full report which will be published early 2014.

First issue of our new briefing series on Drug Markets and Violence, [Eyes wide shut: Corruption and drug related violence in Rosario](#), written by Ross Eventon. December 2013.

On December 10, when the senate approved cannabis regulation in Uruguay, TNI published these two infographics which were visited by 120,000 people:

[Infographic: How will Uruguay's regulation of cannabis work?](#)

[Infographic: Why is Uruguay regulating; not criminalising cannabis?](#)

[Uruguay's pioneering cannabis regulation marks the tipping point in the failed war on drugs](#) – TNI Press Release, December 10, 2013

[Un Plan Paz. Una nueva estrategia sin armas para las drogas en Colombia](#), article by Amira Armenta, December 12, 2013

[INCB vs Uruguay: the art of diplomacy. INCB President Yans disqualified himself and should consider stepping down](#), article by Martin Jelsma, December 17, 2013

[The Netherlands is ready to regulate cannabis](#), article by Tom Blickman and Martin Jelsma, December 19, 2013

IN THE MEDIA

[Ecuador-Colombia Settlement Won't End Spraying](#) – Inter-Press Service IPS, by Angela Meléndez - October 28, 2013

[Wat we kunnen leren van 'cannabisstaat' Colorado](#) – Trouw (Dutch Newspaper), November 5, 2013.

[War on Drugs-debat in Amsterdam met Tom Blickman](#) – November 11, 2013

[Diálogos de paz: el reto de sacar a las Farc del negocio de las drogas](#) – El Heraldo (Colombia), November 17, 2013

[More U.N. States Quietly Say No to Drug War](#) – Inter-Press Service IPS, by Samuel Oakford, December 7, 2013

[Informe en mayoría](#) – Senator Roberto Conde opening speech to the debate on the Uruguay Senate to vote on the cannabis regulation bill. December 10, 2013. Senator Conde quotes extensively from the TNI/IDPC briefing [The limits of latitude](#).

[La hora de regular el cannabis en Uruguay](#) – El Espectador (Colombia) by Daniel Salgar Antolínez, December 10, 2013

['Uruguay da un paso hacia el cambio global'](#) – El Espectador (Colombia) by Daniel Salgar Antolínez, December 11, 2013

[Weed all about it](#) – The Economist (UK), December 11, 2013

<http://druglawreform.info/en/publications/item/5184-infographic-how-will-uruguays-regulation-of-cannabis-work>

<http://druglawreform.info/en/publications/item/5183-infographic-uruguays-pioneering-cannabis-regulation> - Our two infographics have been replicated in numerous Facebook pages and the Spanish version received more than 100,000 hits

On the Uruguay regulation, TNI has also been interviewed by De Standaard (Belgian newspaper), Radio France International RFI, and BNR Nieuws Radio.

[Paz entre los colombianos y con los psicoactivos](#) – Razón Pública (Colombia), por: Elías Sevilla Casas, December 16, 2013 Our briefing [Bogotá's medical care centres for drug addicts \(CAMAD\)](#) is quoted.

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Our monthly column in “Cáñamo” Magazine (Barcelona):

- La inspiración uruguaya
- En Colombia siguen fumigando la coca
- La mayoría de los holandeses está a favor de legalizar el cannabis – Iniciativas locales

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Coming up the next quarter

We will publish (among others):

- A glossy report on cannabis and the UN Conventions
- A seminar report on the costs and benefits of cannabis regulation models in Europe
- A web primer on the UN drug control conventions
- A web primer on cannabis
- A report on changes in the drug markets in South East Asia (glossy)
- A briefing in the series Drugs Markets and Violence, on Brazil and the UPPs.
- A briefing in the series Drug Law Reform, on cannabis in Morocco.

We will organise:

-An Informal Drug Policy Dialogue on Europe and the 2014 high level CND meeting, in Athens together with Diogenis Foundation and the Greek EU Presidency

-Co-organise two side events during the March CND in Vienna: one event on the scheduling of substances, and one on Uruguay.