

Cannabis Regulation in Europe: Country Report Denmark

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Introduction

This report examines policy and practice relating to the regulation of cannabis in Denmark. It was produced as part of a study of cannabis regulation models in Europe, funded by the European Commission and led by the Transnational Institute in Amsterdam. The broader study examines and compares experiences from European countries' experiments with cannabis regulation, including trial proposals for legalisation or decriminalisation of cannabis use, with a particular focus on larger cities in six countries. Denmark has no legal regulation regarding recreational cannabis use, and possession, production, import/export, and buying and selling of cannabis is illegal (Dahl and Frank 2012: 13). This overview of the legal and policy framework for the regulation of cannabis first introduces the policy shifts in cannabis control in Denmark, reviews the political positions on possibilities for legalisation or decriminalisation, and the international context influencing these. It then offers an analysis of how policy and police crackdowns on the open-air cannabis market in Christiania in Copenhagen led to a dispersal and restructuring of the market, with the entry of new criminal gangs. This part of the report indicates an increasingly repressive cannabis policy in Denmark, although there are some openings in the form of a trial for medicinal cannabis commencing in 2018, and a proposed model for legalised cannabis in Copenhagen Municipality.

From Tolerant to Repressive Cannabis Control

Cannabis falls under the 1955 Euphoriant Substances Act, which is used for minor offences that can be punished with up to a two-year prison term, and the penal code's §191 from 1969, which refers to the organised sale and possession of larger amounts of narcotics. The Danish judicial framework does not distinguish between cannabis and other illegal drugs, including hard drugs such as heroin (Houborg and Vammen 2012: 44-45). The penal code's §191 from 1969 was, however, approved on condition that law enforcement would distinguish between cannabis and other drugs, as well as between users and sellers of illegal drugs (*ibid*: 23). Houborg and Vammen (2012) have documented the political and public concerns about young peoples' cannabis use in the 1960s. It was believed that the tightened drug legislation would reduce the availability of cannabis to young people (Houborg 2010: 789). Hence, the penal code's §191 was aimed at suppliers rather than users of cannabis (*ibid*). Political leaders at the time were not in favour of proposals for outright legalisation of cannabis, but were concerned that the introduction of stricter sentences risked further criminalising cannabis users (Houborg and Vammen 2012: 40). Hence, in practice, for over 30 years law enforcement remained relatively lenient towards cannabis users, and to some degree also towards sellers of cannabis (Møller 2010: 135). Cannabis possession for one's own use (up to 10 grams) was not penalised before the early 2000s, and apart from occasional raids and arrests, the street-level cannabis market in the Freetown Christiania was not regularly policed (*ibid*).

The lenient cannabis policy and enforcement practice changed after 2001, when a right-wing government was elected, replacing the previous centre-left government headed by the Social Democratic Party (Møller 2009: 339). This took place in an environment of growing concerns about new forms of drug use among young people, such as ecstasy, the growth of cannabis 'hash clubs' at private addresses (Frank 2008: 28), and critiques of the depenalisation approach to drug possession that had been in place until then (Houborg 2010). These concerns came to have a marked impact on political debates on cannabis. The new government introduced a 'tough on crime' agenda, which led to significant changes to Danish cannabis policy and enforcement practice that continue to shape political debates and police practice today. The 2003 action plan, 'The Fight Against Drugs', led to harsher

enforcement of punishment for cannabis possession, to the extent that possession up to 9.9 grams was punished, at the very least, with a fine (Frank and Dahl 2012: 14). This put an end to the former distinction between drug users and sellers, so that possession of any amount of cannabis would now result in a fine rather than a warning (Frank 2008). A 2007 change in the law meant that fines associated with second and third charges for possession of illegal drugs would increase by 50 and 100 per cent respectively, and also opened up the possibility that warnings could be issued in place of fines for heavy drug users for 'social causes' (Houborg and Pedersen 2013: 21). Further possible exceptions include buyers providing testimony against a dealer, and tourists, who will be requested to leave the country (Frank and Dahl 2012: 14-15). Research conducted by Esben Houborg and Michael Mulbjerg Pedersen indicates that in practice, however, the possibility of issuing a warning for people with a history of drug treatment is rarely used (Houborg and Pedersen 2013: 23). On the basis of interviews with police officers, the researchers further suggest that officers are not always aware of the possibility of issuing warnings based on social causes (*ibid*: 25). Hence, there are multiple cases of police issuing fines rather than warnings to people with a history of problematic drug use and drug treatment, indicating that in practice, the government's zero-tolerance policy also tends to target this group of cannabis users (Information 2016; Houborg 2010).

Political Positions on Legalisation

As of January 2018, five of the nine parliamentary parties in Denmark were in support of state-controlled legalisation of cannabis, while the other four were against any kind of decriminalisation. The parties in support ranged from left-wing to centre-right while those against decriminalisation included the Social Democrats, centre-right and right-wing parties.¹ As Denmark has a tradition of minority governments (headed by either Socialdemokratiet or, as currently, *Venstre*) there is overwhelming opposition towards legalisation or decriminalisation. However, political positions regarding cannabis regulation are not static, as demonstrated in 2016 when the centrist party *Radikale Venstre* changed position on the issue, following a shooting episode at the cannabis market at Christiania in Copenhagen. The party is now in favour of a trial period for state-controlled legalisation of cannabis and in late 2016 submitted a proposal that the government should commence pre-legislative work on a draft bill for a three-year trial period of legalised cannabis. The proposal was rejected by the government, and unless any of the dominant political parties change position on the issue, such an experiment is unlikely to be introduced in the near future. At the municipal and local level, there are examples of politicians going against the party line on the issue, such as Copenhagen's Social Democrat mayor Frank Jensen, who actively supports the idea of a trial for legalised cannabis in Copenhagen Municipality.

International Context

Denmark has signed international conventions relating to drug and cannabis control, including the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances, and the 1988 United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic of Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (Frank and Dahl 2012: 13). In recent parliamentary debates on cannabis regulation, political leaders who oppose legalisation have referred to these international conventions, as well as Denmark's 'international responsibilities', to support arguments against legalisation. This was seen in the government party *Venstre*'s 2016 rejection of a proposal to commence work for a trial legalisation of cannabis, when then Health Minister Karen Ellemann commented: 'Cannabis is covered by the first of three United Nations narcotic conventions. Drugs covered by the convention can only be possessed

for medical and scientific purposes. Legalisation or a suspension of the restriction against cannabis as an intoxicant will, in the view of the government, run counter to Denmark's international obligations' (Folketinget 2016: 3).

Denmark's approach to cannabis control has traditionally been less strict than that of its Scandinavian neighbours, Norway and Sweden. This is now changing with the Norwegian government's recent (2017) push towards decriminalising drug use, a decision that follows from the view that substance users should be helped with treatment rather than being punished (VG Nyheter 2017). In this view, cannabis use is defined as a public health problem rather than a crime and security issue. There are no immediate indications that Denmark will follow in the footsteps of Norway's drug reform, although political debates frequently refer to findings from other international experiences of legalisation or decriminalisation, including Portugal, the Netherlands, Uruguay and the US state of Colorado. However, such references appear to be made equally by supporters and critics of the idea of legalisation, suggesting that international experiences are interpreted differently in political debates on the issue.

Christiania: Crackdown and Dispersal

The Freetown Christiania in Copenhagen, Denmark's capital, has been a recurring reference point in Danish political debates and policy initiatives relating to cannabis regulation. Cannabis smoking has been central to the social environment of Christiania from its early days (Frank 2008: 29). Christiania grew out of the hippie movement and youth revolts of the 1960s and 1970s. Their experiments with alternative ways of living and organising led to the founding of a number of communes across Denmark as well as the Freetown of Christiania in Copenhagen. The Freetown was founded in 1971, when squatters occupied an abandoned military area in Copenhagen surrounded by embankments that form part of a centuries-old fortification. The neighbourhood is known for its many colourful buildings erected throughout the area and on the surrounding embankments, its car-free streets, alternative creative scene, and, not least, the street-level cannabis market on Pusher Street, which has operated at Christiania since its beginning. Pusher Street is now one of the largest street-level cannabis markets in Northern Europe (Møller 2010: 135). Today, approximately 800 people reside in Christiania, which is one of Copenhagen's primary tourist attractions. Police crackdowns on Christiania's cannabis market often occurred in the context of political debates about closing the Freetown, which remained under state ownership. The threat of Christiania's closure meant that inhabitants occasionally removed cannabis stalls on their own initiative (Asmussen 2008). However, in 2012, a Christiania-based foundation took out a mortgage to buy most of the buildings from the state, with the exception of the surrounding embankments, which remain state-owned, but are protected due to their historical status as a military fortification.

Over the past decades, references to Christiania have figured prominently in political calls for harsher punishment for selling cannabis, most recently in January 2018 when the right-wing Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti) initiated a parliamentary hearing about the situation in Christiania. Christiania's cannabis market has traditionally been controlled by the motorcycle gang Hells Angels, with the involvement of others such as Bandidos and Satudarah. Since hard drugs have mostly been kept out of Christiania, the cannabis market was mainly tolerated until the early 2000s.² The 2003 action plan 'The Fight Against Drugs' however, entailed plans to close Christiania's cannabis market. In 2004, police raided Pusher Street and closed down cannabis stalls, arresting 60 dealers and 20 lookouts (Asmussen 2007, 2008; Møller 2009). Moreover, a zero-tolerance zone was put in place which focused on cannabis buyers. After the raid, there was regular patrolling, although this dwindled over time. Møller has documented

how the closure of, and subsequent increased police attention to cannabis sale in, Pusher Street has led to the dispersal of the cannabis market, with more covert cannabis sale occurring in hash clubs throughout Copenhagen (Møller 2010: 137, 2017: 26; Frank 2008). Recently, researchers have begun to explore the emergence of new modes of cannabis distribution, such as ‘mobile dealing’, a kind of delivery service where buyers call sellers and make appointments for the delivery of illegal drugs. In Denmark, such delivery services are today popularly known as ‘brown couriers’, because their primary product is cannabis (Søgaard, 2017). A final consequence of the crackdown on Christiania was that cannabis sale in other areas no longer took place separately from the sale of other ‘harder’ drugs (Møller 2009: 341).

Following the crackdown and initial 2004 closure of Christiania’s cannabis market, cannabis sales have repeatedly reappeared in the area. For a while, these took place less openly, but despite repeated raids, the cannabis stalls in Pusher Street have reappeared. In September 2016, when a cannabis dealer shot and injured a civilian and two police officers, inhabitants of Christiania again removed the stalls on their own initiative, but they reappeared not long after. In November 2017, police targeted cannabis buyers in Christiania through the use of drone surveillance of Pusher Street, where cannabis was again sold openly from stalls. They subsequently arrested 60 buyers and confiscated 11.7 kg of cannabis and 3,478 joints (Politiken 2017a). Stalls were again fully operating when the police moved in once more on 21 December 2017, and removed around 40 stalls and confiscated a smaller amount of cannabis. In May 2018, police crackdowns at Christiania intensified. Following a three-day closure of the cannabis market by people living in Christiania, the police removed cannabis stalls from Pusher Street on two consecutive days, and vowed to intensify their presence with daily patrolling with the aim of putting a permanent stop to cannabis stalls in the area (DR 2018d). As already noted, policy changes in the early 2000s dissolved the previous distinction between cannabis users and sellers. Police interventions in Christiania mirror this general tendency towards an increasingly repressive ‘zero tolerance’ drug policy and its enforcement, which targets not only sellers and distributors of cannabis, but also buyers and users. Moreover, as will be described below, in Denmark there has been an increased focus on gangs and organised crime in political and public debates about cannabis in recent years.

Gang Crime

Intensified political attention and repeated police crackdowns on Christiania contributed to opening the cannabis market to a new set of criminal groupings. Kim Møller has explored how the crackdown led to a restructuring of the cannabis market, which allowed immigrant youth gangs to enter it (Møller 2017). These figured prominently in media reports on a ‘gang war’ in Denmark throughout 2017. A culmination of shooting incidents occurred primarily in the Copenhagen neighbourhood of Nørrebro, but also in Aarhus, Denmark’s second largest city. During the summer and autumn of 2017, the gang conflict and its effect on the lives of ordinary residents in Nørrebro was widely reported in the Danish media. Between mid-June and early November 2017, approximately 40 shooting incidents took place in Copenhagen with 20 people injured and four killed (Politiken 2017b). The exact causes of the conflict are disputed, but have been described as a turf-war between criminal gangs, as well as competition over the share of the illegal cannabis market. On 12 December 2017, Brothas and Loyal to Familia agreed to a ‘ceasefire’, which has so far put an end to the violent confrontations that culminated in 2017.

References to the gang conflict appeared to play an increasingly central role in political debates about cannabis and possibilities for its legalisation. In January 2017, the then Social Democrat mayor of Copenhagen, Jesper Christensen, who had previously pushed for a trial legalisation in Copenhagen,

put forward two key arguments for the municipality's calls for a such a trial. First, he suggested that legalisation would 'remove some of the economy of the criminal gangs who today profit from cannabis being illegal' (Information 2017). Moreover, he suggested that the trial would enable the municipality to have better access to youth who sought contact with criminal groups in Copenhagen, and to prevent children and youth from using cannabis (*ibid*). Likewise, *Radikale Venstre's* 2016 proposal for a trial legalisation of cannabis noted that:

The illegal cannabis sale at Christiania and elsewhere is controlled by organized criminals and gangs, and the year-long intervention against these gangs and the illegal cannabis sale has not come to fruit – on the contrary. Cannabis sale supports a tough and criminal environment which creates insecurity for ordinary people, and puts demand on the police ... Therefore, it is necessary to rethink and explore the possibilities for a responsible and controlled way of legalizing cannabis, so that cannabis sale does not continue to remain a lucrative business for organized criminals. (Folketinget 2016: 2)

In rejecting the proposal, the government party *Venstre* likewise made references to the issue of gang crime, but argued that removal of the illegal cannabis market through legalisation would only mean that gangs move on to other criminal activities, such as the sale of harder drugs (Folketinget 2016). Before 2017 there had also been gang rivalries over the cannabis market, including shootings. The issue of gangs and organised crime has thus become increasingly central in Danish debates about cannabis and its legalisation and decriminalisation, but has not significantly altered political party *positions* on cannabis regulation. An exception is *Radikale Venstre* which, as mentioned above, changed its stance on the issue following a shoot-out in Christiania which left two police officers and a civilian injured. Otherwise, parties which oppose legalisation have referred to the criminal cannabis market to support arguments against legalisation, while those in favour argue that legalisation would significantly reduce the income base of criminal gangs. In summary, the issue of gang crime has become central in Danish debates about cannabis legalisation, but has not to date had a significant impact on the possibility that proposed regulated legalisation of cannabis will be approved by the government.

Authorities' concern with the intertwining of criminal organisations and the cannabis market has also resulted in a tightening of legislative control (Korsell and Larsson, 2011). These include amendments of Danish procedural law in 1997, making it easier for police to conduct surveillance and house searches (Cornils and Greve, 2004). Furthermore, legislative changes in 2003 made it easier for police to use undercover agents, and introduced a new punitive measure enabling police to confiscate money and valuables from those convicted of drug-related crimes if they could not prove that these had been generated through legitimate means. This measure was controversial, as it included a shift in the burden of proof (Møller, 2011).

Medicinal Cannabis Framework

While there has not been a sustained public or political debate about cannabis for recreational use, debates about medicinal cannabis have been prominent in Danish media. Several political leaders and other public figures have campaigned for legalised medicinal cannabis and on 3 December 2017, the Danish Parliament unanimously voted in favour of a four-year trial period legalising medicinal cannabis for a select group of medical patients. The trial period began on 1 January 2018. Prior to this, it had been legal for doctors to prescribe certain industrially produced medicinal cannabis products. Sativex products were approved by the Danish Medicines Agency (*Lægemiddelstyrelsen*) and could be prescribed

to patients with muscular sclerosis (MS). The trial period that began in 2018 opened up a broader variety of products which do not have to be approved by the Medicines Agency or be prepared by a pharmacy. Moreover, medicinal cannabis can now be prescribed to patients (over the age of 18) with MS, spinal-cord injuries, undergoing chemotherapy or suffering chronic pain. For all patients, all conventional treatments should be exhausted before a doctor can prescribe medicinal cannabis. Cannabis used for medicinal purposes can either be imported or grown in Denmark. The trial thereby opens the market for companies to grow cannabis in Denmark. By November 2017, 15 companies had applied to the Danish Medicines Agency for permission to do so.

The trial was met with opposition from Danish doctors, because of insufficient medical evidence about the effects and possible side-effects of medicinal cannabis. Immediately after the trial start-up, the media reported that patients found it hard to identify doctors who were willing to prescribe cannabis. Indeed, several medical associations advised doctors not to do so. For instance, the Danish College of General Practitioners stresses that ‘the cannabis products politicians want doctors to prescribe and take responsibility for are not approved by authorities’, which is problematic in relation to patients’ safety. They further underline the lack of knowledge about the effects of medicinal cannabis on chronic nerve pain, and the side-effects potentially caused by cannabis use. In conclusion, doctors are advised not to prescribe medicinal cannabis but are encouraged to refer patients to a specialist. Likewise, they are advised not to renew prescriptions originally made by specialists (DSAM 2018). In response, the Patients’ Association has suggested making a list of doctors willing to prescribe cannabis so that patients can be referred to them (DR 2018a). This has been rejected by the General Practitioners’ Association on the grounds that it would put too much pressure on those doctors, and because it is not necessarily possible for a doctor to treat other doctors’ patients (*ibid*). In response, Health Minister Ellen Trane Nørby encouraged patients to ‘change doctors’ if their own doctor refuses to prescribe cannabis (DR 2018b). These start-up difficulties, which remain unresolved at the time of writing, have caused patients’ organisations to warn of the risk that patients will come to rely on the illegal cannabis market.

Comparative Framework for Cannabis Regulation Proposals – the Copenhagen Model

Because of the overall political opposition to legalising or decriminalising cannabis, there is no active regulation model in Denmark. Before the November 2017 municipal elections, an alderman and two town councillors in Aarhus municipality, representing three different left-wing political parties (*Enhedslisten, Alternativet, and Socialistisk Folkeparti*), promised to push for a three-year trial in Aarhus municipality following the elections. In a column published in the local newspaper, they referred to the issue of gang crime, and emphasised the growth of gangs in Aarhus in 2017 and argued that legalisation would serve to reduce their income base (Medom et al. 2017). At present, no proposal has been formally presented in Aarhus, and Copenhagen remains the only municipality that has actively pushed for legalisation.

Copenhagen’s City Council submitted cannabis-regulation proposals to the government in 2012, 2014, and 2016, all of which were rejected. This section summarises and describes the ‘Copenhagen Model’, as these proposals are known, focusing on the 2014 proposal, which has been the most detailed so far, and has accompanied subsequent proposals to the government, most recently in 2016 when *Radikale Venstre* submitted a proposal for a trial legalisation of cannabis. The 2014 proposal outlined suggestions for a trial model for controlled legalisation of cannabis in Copenhagen municipality. Two overall aims of the trial were outlined, namely that the trial should lead to a reduction of users and of harmful effects and to a reduction of the income base for organised crime.

Summary of Copenhagen City Council's 2014 Proposal for Cannabis Legalisation

The proposal outlines a three-year trial period, and argues that controlled legalisation would ensure better control of cannabis products and the cannabis market, and contribute to removing the income base for organised crime. The proposal details the character of sales outlets, product types and user groups, prevention and treatment initiatives, and the organisation and evaluation of the trial.

Sales outlets

The proposal suggests that there should be five or six municipal sales outlets with trained staff in Copenhagen neighbourhoods. The number and location of sale venues should ensure a balance between the risk of causing too widespread availability of cannabis, and of deterring users from obtaining cannabis from the illegal market if they regard the municipal cannabis outlets as too inaccessible. This concern also affects the proposal's suggestions for sale hours: most municipal outlets should be open only during the day, while a single outlet should be open at all hours to ensure that night-time buyers do not resort to the illegal market. The proposal underlines that no products other than legal cannabis and possibly related equipment should be sold at municipal outlets. Moreover, it proposes that these should offer a 'neutral environment' that does not serve to encourage cannabis use, and that there should be access to information about cannabis products, harmful effects, and treatment offers.

Products and users

The proposal suggests that cannabis should be produced in Denmark and sold by municipal authorities. Little mention is made of the product itself, except that it should contain an 'appropriate balance' between CBD and THC, and that it should match the expectations of users who are believed to be recipients of the majority of illegal cannabis sales, and who experience the most harmful effects of cannabis. In short, the product should match the expectations of regular rather than occasional cannabis users. This should ensure that at-risk users opt to buy legal and municipal-regulated cannabis instead of turning to the illegal market. The proposal suggests that this will protect 'heavy' users from the harmful effects of illegal products, including the risk of them moving on to harder drugs. Prices of municipal cannabis products should match those on the illegal market. Buyers should be at least 18 years of age and reside in Denmark, in order to prevent cannabis tourism. When purchasing cannabis, they should identify themselves with their social security card, but should not be registered, in order to avoid scaring off users from the legal market. Buyers should be able to purchase a maximum of 5 grams a day, although the proposal leaves an opening for special regulations to apply to individual cannabis users. It further suggests that users tend to reduce their consumption of cannabis when the stress connected with obtaining drugs on the illegal market is reduced. This, it is further argued, might support their mental capacity to undergo substance-use treatment.

Prevention and treatment

In connection with the trial, the municipality will develop a prevention strategy with interventions that take into account the possibilities and challenges that may emerge during the trial period. The proposal suggests that municipal cannabis sale can be expected to generate a surplus since, it is argued, cannabis is relatively

simple to grow, and because legal sale does not entail costs relating to guards, and because illegal sellers have a large profit from cannabis sale. The profit from municipal cannabis sale should go to prevention and treatment, with the aim of supporting a diversified approach to different target groups, including an expanded early-intervention and treatment approach, including at the youth education institutions.

Law

The trial will require new legislation, including guidelines for municipal-led production and sale, clarification of circumstances such as the maximum amount for private possession, and guidelines for cannabis use in a public space.

Organisation and evaluation

In terms of organising the trial, the proposal suggests the formation of a steering group with responsibility for defining and adjusting the trial framework. This includes decisions such as determining and balancing the price of municipal cannabis products in relation to consumption and the illegal market, adjustment and quality control of products, the development of information material, etc. The steering group should include representatives from Copenhagen Municipality, Copenhagen Police, relevant state authorities and those in charge of evaluating the trial. Ongoing evaluation should be conducted with the possibility of adjusting and if necessary terminating it if its effects turn out to be detrimental to the aims of the trial. The ongoing evaluation ensures a qualified assessment of whether it should become permanent. Evaluation should give the steering group the opportunity to make adjustments during the trial, including the possibility of ending the trial if its effects are 'disadvantageous'.

Political Reception of Regulation Proposals

So far, each proposal has been rejected by the government in office at the time of its submission. Copenhagen City Council's 2012 request for a trial period of legalised cannabis was rejected by then Justice Minister Morten Bødskov from the Social Democrat Party (Socialdemokratiet). In the rejection letter, he stated the government's intention to increase efforts to combat the sale of cannabis and other forms of drug-related criminality (Bødskov 2012). The overall emphasis in the rejection was on the harmful health effects of cannabis use. With reference to a report conducted by the Danish Health and Medicines Authority, Bødskov argued that such a trial would increase the availability of cannabis, and could further be expected to increase cannabis use and related harmful effects (*ibid*). The 2017 rejection of a similar proposal made by *Radikale Venstre* highlighted four main points as key to the government's dismissal. First, then Health Minister Karen Ellemann referred to the harmful effects of cannabis use on young people. Second, she pointed to prevention strategies, arguing that the current prohibition supported a decline in the availability of cannabis. Third, she raised the issue of organised crime, and argued that legalisation would not have a measurable impact on organised criminal gang activity. And finally, as mentioned above, she pointed to international conventions, suggesting that even on a trial basis, the legalisation proposal would contradict to Denmark's international obligations (Folketinget 2016). These points mirror the concerns raised by other parties who oppose legalisation. Overall, rejections appear to have moved from a primary focus on health and the harmful effects of cannabis use, towards an increasingly strong focus on drug-related crime and gang activity.

Summary

To summarise, the context of cannabis policy and enforcement practice in Denmark has been increasingly repressive, shifting from an environment of tolerance towards a 'zero-tolerance' approach to the sale, use, and possession of cannabis. Political opposition to legalisation (and likewise, decriminalisation) so far outweighs support, and widespread media attention on the issue of medicinal cannabis since 2016 has not altered political positions on cannabis for recreational use. The issue of gang conflicts and organised crime, particularly in 2017, contributed to renewed public and political attention to cannabis dealers and users, but with the exception of one political party, *Radikale Venstre*, this has not led to increased political support for legislative proposals. That said, the issue of legalisation is kept alive through regular hearings and conferences held at the Danish parliament and media debates. Most recently, the former chair of the Social Democratic Party's Parliamentary Group spoke out in favour of legalised cannabis in opposition to the official party line (DR 2018c). It remains to be seen whether other cities such as Aarhus will continue to submit similar proposals, and whether this might strengthen calls for legalisation.

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Endnotes

1. In support were: *Enhedslisten*, *Socialistisk Folkeparti*, *Alternativet*, *Radikale Venstre*, and *Liberal Alliance*, while *Socialdemokratiet*, *Venstre*, *Konservative*, and *Dansk Folkeparti* oppose decriminalisation.

2. In the 1990s biker gangs, especially Hells Angels and Bandidos, fought about territories in what was called the 'big Nordic biker war' (for details see e.g. Storgaard 2000). In this period Christiania's inhabitants were involved in securing that hard drugs were not sold in Christiania, but that Pusher Street stayed as a cannabis market solely (ibid).

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NEW APPROACHES ON HARM REDUCTION POLICIES AND PRACTICES

The NAHRPP project (New Approaches in Harm Reduction Policies and Practices) is a joint project of the Transnational Institute (TNI), based in the Netherlands, ICEERS (Spain), Forum Droghe (Italy) and Diogenis (Greece), supported by the European Union. The project addresses recent drug policy developments in Europe.

One section of this project, led by TNI, is focused on the role of local authorities in cannabis regulation. Local and regional authorities across Europe are confronted with the negative consequences of a persisting illicit cannabis market. Increasingly, local and regional authorities, non-governmental pressure groups and grassroots movements are advocating for regulation of the recreational cannabis market, rather than prohibition. This project analyses the possibility of cannabis market regulation models, alongside political, policy, and legal steps under exploration by local authorities in Belgium, Spain, Switzerland, Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands. It is hoped that the information collected through this initiative will help to improve the understanding of regulating drug markets as a means to reduce the negative consequences of illicit drug markets on individuals and society.

In order to better understand the situation around, and possibilities for, local and regional cannabis regulation, a series of six country reports were developed, providing background for an overarching analytical report. The country reports provide detailed information about the state of cannabis policy, and the possibilities for change, within each country. This report addresses the past, present, and future of cannabis policy in Denmark.

PUBLICATION DETAILS

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