

Progressive Policy Shift: Germany Legalizes Personal Cannabis Possession

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP) — The aroma of celebration wafted through the air as marijuana enthusiasts in Germany ignited joints in jubilation. On Monday, the country marked a historic moment as it legalized the possession of small amounts of cannabis for recreational purposes. However, amidst the smoke and cheers, the debate surrounding the drug continues to smolder.

The German Cannabis Association, a fervent advocate for the new legislation, orchestrated a “smoke-in” at Berlin’s iconic Brandenburg Gate to commemorate the law’s enactment at midnight. Similar public consumption events were planned across the nation, with gatherings in front of Cologne Cathedral, as well as in Hamburg, Regensburg, and Dortmund. Germany now stands as the third European Union member state to legalize cannabis for personal use, following in the footsteps of Malta and Luxembourg.

Proponents of the law argue that legalization will strike a blow to the illicit cannabis trade, safeguard consumers against harmful contaminants, and enable law enforcement to focus on more pressing matters while implementing measures to prevent underage use.

Under the new law, adults are permitted to possess up to 25 grams (nearly 1 ounce) of marijuana for recreational purposes and can cultivate up to three plants for personal use. Consumption is prohibited within 100 meters (109 yards) of school or playground entrances, a provision that took effect immediately.

Beginning July 1, German residents aged 18 and older will have the opportunity to join nonprofit “cannabis clubs,” each limited to 500 members. Members will be allowed to purchase up to 25 grams of cannabis per day, or a maximum of 50 grams per month, with stricter limits for those under 21. The legislation prohibits membership in multiple clubs and mandates that club expenses be covered by staggered membership fees based on individual usage.

In addition to legalization, the law includes provisions for an amnesty program, whereby sentences for cannabis-related offenses that are no longer considered illegal will be reviewed and, in many cases, overturned. However, regional authorities express concerns over the potential strain on the judicial system due to the anticipated influx of cases.

Over the past two decades, European Union member states have increasingly moved towards leniency in cannabis policies, ranging from decriminalization to diversion to treatment programs. In the Netherlands, although cannabis remains illegal, the sale of small quantities in designated “coffee shops” is tolerated. Meanwhile, several European countries have established frameworks for medical cannabis use.

Nevertheless, the legalization of cannabis in Germany may not mark the end of the debate. The law faced opposition from certain federal states and the center-right Christian Democrats but was ultimately championed by the current coalition government comprising Chancellor Olaf Scholz’s Social Democrats, the Greens, and the pro-business Free Democrats.

As Germany takes its first puff of legalized recreational cannabis, it enters uncharted territory, navigating a complex landscape of regulation, social attitudes, and ongoing discourse surrounding the implications of this

groundbreaking legislation.

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