

Czech parliament green-lights medical marijuana

January 30 2013

Czech lawmakers on Wednesday green-lighted marijuana as a legal medicine for use by patients suffering from serious illnesses.

The bill, which must now be signed by the president to take effect, makes the drug legal and available on prescription for patients with cancer, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis or [psoriasis](#).

The move was approved by 67 of 74 senators present in the 81-member upper house.

The Czech Republic will first import the drug for about a year, reportedly from Israel or the Netherlands, until the State Institute for Drug Control starts issuing licences valid for a maximum of five years to local growers.

Under the bill, which does not allow [marijuana](#) treatments to be covered by [health insurance](#), the institute will also determine the crop area and organise tenders for marijuana purchases from farmers.

"Every new commodity is good for our farmers," Jan Veleba, head of the Agricultural Chamber, said quoted by the CTK Czech News Agency.

An ex-communist country of 10.5 million people which joined the EU in 2004, the Czech Republic is one of the most liberal [European countries](#) when it comes to soft drugs.

Under local rules, people holding up to 15 grammes (0.53 ounces) of marijuana or growing up to five plants of cannabis risk just a small fine—an approach that often attracts smokers from other countries such as Poland, where tougher rules apply.

A 2011 national report on [narcotics](#) said 16.1 percent of Czechs aged 15-34 confessed having used marijuana in that year, down from 20.3 percent a year earlier.

In December, Colorado became the second US state after Washington to legalise marijuana for recreational use as its governor signed a voter-backed proposal into law.

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