

German lawmakers green-light medical cannabis use

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German lawmakers on Thursday legalised cannabis use for medical purposes for people with serious diseases such as certain cancers and multiple sclerosis.

The law, passed unanimously by the lower house, also allows doctors to prescribe [cannabis](#) to patients suffering from epilepsy or chronic nausea due to chemotherapy.

"Today is a beautiful day," said Rainer Hayek, a lawmaker in Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservative CDU party.

He stressed the law would not allow "smoking joints on prescription" and did not legalise the drug for recreational use.

Germany joins a long list of European countries that have legalised some cannabis products or decriminalised possession of small amounts of the drug.

The list includes Austria, Britain, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Italy, Macedonia, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Spain.

German patients with a prescription will be able to buy cannabis extract or dried flower buds in pharmacies.

Some may also order synthetic derivatives of cannabis, such as

dronabinol, from abroad.

The law, which requires the costs to be borne by health insurance funds, will enter into force in March.

It will especially help patients in palliative care, said Health Minister Hermann Groeche, whose law was welcomed by all parties, on both the left and right.

Possession of cannabis remains prohibited, though it is tolerated for small quantities that vary among Germany's 16 states.

Germany will set up a public cannabis agency responsible for its cultivation.

In the meantime, the country will import the cannabis products from abroad.

The bill was announced in May after a patient was granted the right to grow cannabis after demonstrating that it was the only substance that alleviated his suffering.

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