

Germany moves ahead with plan to legalize cannabis sales

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File photo shows cannabis plant growing in a farm in Chonburi province, eastern Thailand on June 5, 2022. Credit: AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit, file

The German government is setting in motion plans to legalize the sale of cannabis for recreational purposes, aiming to have legislation ready later

this year.

The Health Ministry said Monday that it will start holding expert hearings on various aspects of the issue Tuesday. It said that more than 200 representatives from the medical, legal and other fields will take part, along with officials from various levels of government and unidentified international experts.

The pledge to legalize controlled sales of cannabis to adults in licensed shops is one of a series of reforms outlined in last year's coalition deal between the three socially liberal parties that make up Chancellor Olaf Scholz's government.

They said the plan would ensure [quality control](#) while also protecting young people, and agreed that the "social effects" of the new legislation would be examined after four years.

Scholz's coalition took office in December. In early May, Health Minister Karl Lauterbach said that he planned to draw up [draft legislation](#) in the year's second half following the hearings with experts.

The five hearings, which will be held through the end of this month, will address what measures are needed to ensure the best protection for [young people](#) and of health and consumers, government drug czar Burkhard Blienert said.

"Like many others, I have worked for years toward us in Germany finally ending the criminalization of cannabis consumers and beginning a modern and health-oriented cannabis policy," he said in a statement.

Among other liberalizing plans, the government has launched a drive to remove from Germany's criminal code a ban on doctors "advertising" abortion services. It also wants to ease the path to German citizenship,

lift restrictions on dual citizenship and reduce the minimum age for voting in national and European elections from 18 to 16.

The government also wants to scrap 40-year-old legislation that requires transsexual people to get a psychological assessment and a court decision before officially changing gender, a process that often involves intimate questions. It is due to be replaced with a new "self-determination law."

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