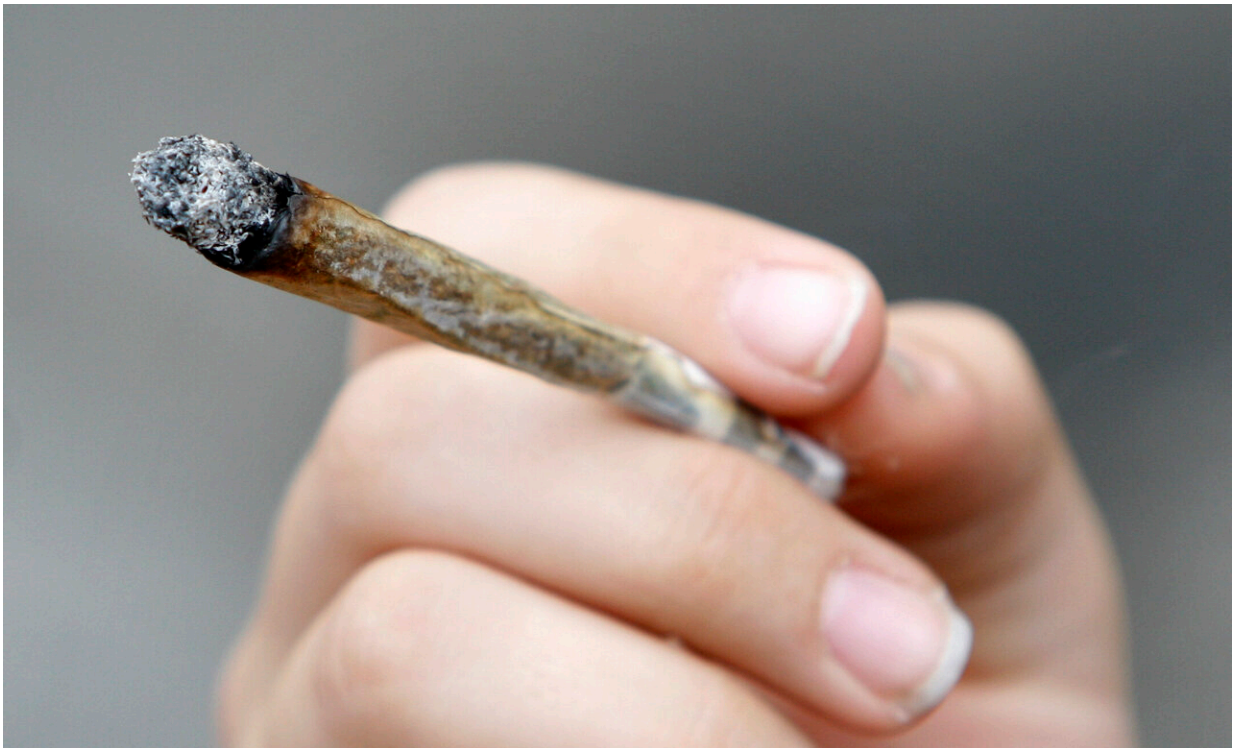


Germany unveils cannabis liberalization plan, with caveats

October 26 2022, by Geir Moulson



A protestor holds a joint during the hemp-parade demanding the legalization of cannabis in Berlin, Aug. 2, 2008. Germany's health minister has unveiled plans to decriminalize the possession of up to 30 grams of cannabis and allow the sale of the substance to adults for recreational purposes. Credit: AP Photo/Franka Bruns, File

Germany's health minister unveiled a plan Wednesday to decriminalize

the possession of up to 30 grams (about 1 ounce) of cannabis and to allow the sale of the substance to adults for recreational purposes in a controlled market.

Berlin will check with the European Union's executive commission whether the plan approved by the German government is in line with EU laws and would proceed with legislation "on this basis" only if it gets the [green light](#), Health Minister Karl Lauterbach said.

Lauterbach said the new rules could serve as "a model for Europe." Realistically, they won't take effect before 2024, he said.

The plan calls for [cannabis](#) to be grown under license and sold to adults at licensed outlets to combat the black market, Lauterbach said. Individuals would be allowed to grow up to three plants, and to buy or possess 20 to 30 grams of marijuana.

If the legislation comes as planned, "this would be, on the one hand, the most liberal cannabis legalization project in Europe, and on the other hand it would also be the most tightly regulated market," Lauterbach said.

He said "better youth and health protection" are the key aims of the government's proposal.

"It could be a model for Europe," which has a patchwork of often restrictive laws, he said.



German Health Minister Karl Lauterbach speaks during a news conference in Berlin, Wednesday, Oct. 26, 2022. Germany's health minister has unveiled plans to decriminalize the possession of up to 30 grams of cannabis and allow the sale of the substance to adults for recreational purposes. Credit: Britta Pedersen/dpa via AP

The minister, who himself was long skeptical about cannabis legalization, argued that the current system isn't working, with consumption rising and the illegal market flourishing. He said 4 million people in Germany, a nation of 83 million, used cannabis last year and a quarter of 18- to 24-year-olds have used it.

Lauterbach said Germany didn't want to emulate the model long

practiced by the Netherlands, Germany's northwestern neighbor. It combines decriminalization with little [market](#) regulation.

Germany will examine whether cannabis can be consumed where it is sold, but it doesn't currently plan to allow that, Lauterbach said. The same goes for the sale of the substance in edible form.

Shops that sell cannabis wouldn't be allowed also to sell alcohol or [tobacco products](#), and couldn't be located near schools.

The government does not plan to set a price, but does intend to set quality requirements, the [health minister](#) said. He left open whether a "cannabis tax" above and beyond the standard sales tax, which could be used to fund information on the risks of the drug, would be levied but said the product shouldn't be made so expensive that it can't compete with the [black market](#).

The cannabis plan is one of a series of reforms outlined in last year's coalition deal between the three socially liberal parties in Chancellor Olaf Scholz's government. They agreed at the time that the "social effects" of the new legislation would be examined after four years.

Among other liberalizing plans, the government has removed 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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