

Drugrelated criminality in the Netherlands, some European countries and the US

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Utrecht 2009

Summary

This study is an exploration of trends in registered data and published investigations on drug-related criminal offences, to investigate the possibility that the Netherlands diverges from other European countries and the US with respect to drugrelated criminality.

The number of druglaw offences increased between 1990 and 2000, both in Europe as in the Netherlands.

Especially in the last decennium the level of police registered personal use of drugs or personal possession of drugs has grown. However, at the same time data on the prevalence of the actual use of drugs do not show an increase. This suggests that the registered increase in drug-criminality is primarily due to the stricter enforcement by the police of druglaws on personal use.

In the Netherlands personal use is not criminalised. Therefore, the recent increase in the number of druglaw offences in the Netherlands is probably caused by the stricter prosecution of trafficking, especially of cannabis-related trafficking and the cultivation of cannabis in 2003 and 2004.

Many prisoners (50 to 70%) have a history of druguse or addiction. Circa 20% has been detained for druglaw offences. Many inmates use drugs (circa 50%) and some of them inject their drugs (2 to 19%). No indications were found that the prison population in the Netherlands differs in this respect from the prison population in other countries.

Nuisance related to the use of drugs sometimes occurs both in the Netherlands as well as in other countries and coincides with other forms of socially unaccepted patterns of behaviour.

Conclusion

Trends in available statistics and investigations on drugrelated crime do not show major differences between the Netherlands, other European countries and the US. The only marked difference between the Netherlands and other countries is the increase in the enforcement of cannabis-related druglaws since 2000.