

SUMMARY

Mennes, R., J. Snippe, M. Sijstra, B. Bieleman (2017)

Monitor ontwikkelingen coffeeshopbeleid. Meting 2016. WODC / St. INTRAVAL, Den Haag/ Groningen-Rotterdam.

Research and advice bureau INTRAVAL has performed the third measurement over 2016 of the monitor following the developments in coffee shop policy. This measurement is commissioned by the Research and Documentation Centre (WODC) of the Dutch Ministry of Security and Justice. The Ministry will use this monitor to map the developments of the coffee shop policy in 2014, 2015 and 2016.

National and regional data from the Police and the Public Prosecution Service (OM) were obtained and analysed. In addition, 81 local experts were consulted in a sample of 31 municipalities from 11 judicial regions throughout the Netherlands: 35 local officials and 46 police officials. The experts answered questions on coffee shop policy, coffee shop tourism, soft drugs tourism, nuisance in the vicinity of coffee shops, and illegal soft drug and hard drug sales. In total, 67 questionnaires were completed. The results of the third measurement over 2016 have been compared with the results of the first and second measurements from 2014 and 2015 respectively.

Coffee shop tourism

Coffee shop tourism (foreign tourists visiting coffee shops) occurs in less than half (13 of 31) of the municipalities involved. The municipalities with high cultural-historic values attract more coffee shop tourists than others. Compared to other municipalities, coffee shop tourism also occurs more often in municipalities in the east and south near the border. In the east, these tourists are mainly German and in the south mainly Belgian and French.

The extent of coffee shop tourism seems to have decreased in comparison to 2015. In 7 of the 31 municipalities experts report a decline. None of these experts can explain the decrease. In three municipalities where there appears to be an increase, experts are able to explain this development. The increase in coffee shop tourism seems to coincide with the increase in popularity of large Dutch cities among foreign tourists.

Soft drugs tourism

The phenomenon soft drugs tourism (cannabis sales to foreign tourists outside coffee shops) occurs in less municipalities than coffee shop tourism (only 6 out of 31). In these municipalities the tourists who buy soft drugs outside the coffee shop mainly originate from Belgium and Germany. The municipalities where this does not occur or barely occurs, are visited by fewer foreign visitors or the tourists prefer to buy their soft drugs in the coffee shop rather than at illegal points of sale.

Soft drugs tourism has declined in 8 municipalities because fewer foreign drug tourists come to these municipalities than before. However, it is not clear why they no longer travel to these municipalities. In three municipalities there is an increase and the plausible explanation for this is the increasing popularity of (these and other) Dutch cities among foreign tourists.

Soft drugs related nuisance

In most municipalities, soft drugs related nuisance in the vicinity of coffee shops is minimal. Experts of 27 of the 31 municipalities indicate that there is little or no coffee shop related nuisance. In the 4 municipalities where nuisance does occur, the experts describe this as "mild". The nuisance in these 4 municipalities consists of lingering and dealing drugs in the vicinity of the coffee shops and harassment of passers-by. There are no municipalities with moderate to severe nuisance of coffee shops in 2016. Compared to 2015, coffee shop nuisance has declined in 2016. In 6 of the 31 municipalities the nuisance has declined and there is no increase of nuisance in any municipality.

Illegal sales

Most municipalities dealt with at least one form of illegal sales in 2016, but in small municipalities illegal sales occur to a limited degree. The most common (and most visible) form of illegal sales are, just like 2015, street dealers and drug runners. In some large municipalities these people determine the streetscape in their working area. Other forms of illegal sales (dealers dealing via mobile phone, from home, at stores, and in the hospitality sector) are less visible to the experts than drug trafficking on the streets.

In general, most municipalities have seen little change in the illegal sales. For 2016, experts in 21 out of 31 municipalities report that the level of illegal soft drug sales is more or less the same as in 2015. In 4 municipalities illegal sales of soft drugs seems to have increased, while in 4 other municipalities there appears to be a decrease. Experts of both municipality groups cannot provide a clear explanation for the increase or decrease. In some of these municipalities, experts primarily based their answers on "instinct".

In-depth study

Based on the answers of the experts, it can be concluded that if foreign tourists are allowed to visit coffee shops (coffee shop tourism), sales to foreigners on the streets (soft drugs tourism) decline. At the same time, both coffee shop tourism and soft drugs tourism have declined in the southern municipalities where non-residents are excluded from coffee shops due to the enforcement of the Residents Criterion.

In addition, the nuisance caused by coffee shops decreases year after year, while citizens appear to be reporting drug and/or alcohol related nuisance more often. The increase of nuisance reports and the decrease of nuisance in the vicinity of coffee shops may coincide with a shift of drug trafficking on the streets to other locations. Where trafficking initially took place in the vicinity of the coffee shop, in some municipalities this could have moved to areas around train stations and to drug houses in residential areas.

In the in-depth study we will investigate the developments in coffee shop tourism and soft drugs tourism, the increase of nuisance reports and the possible relocation of street trafficking. These phenomena will be investigated in the municipalities where these developments are significant. By performing various on-site research activities, the findings above can be further characterized and interpreted.