

## Role of the Criminal Justice System in the United Kingdom and Netherlands Drug Policies

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The ways drugs are combated and tackled vary from country to country. This essay will be focusing on the role of the criminal justice system in the United Kingdom and Netherlands drug policies, highlighting their similarities and differences and also determining which of the countries has the better approach to drug control.

### Key Similarities

The United Kingdom and the Netherlands are both creative and pragmatic in handling drug abuse in their society; they basically have the same strategy in curbing the illicit drug epidemic which is enforcing laws, educating the society, and a good and solid healthcare to take care of addicts. Police in both countries are mainly after dealers, by this approach, they reason that the spread of these illicit drugs will be reduced to the barest minimum and drug users will not be able to have access to these drugs once the dealers are nipped in the bud.

Furthermore, drug addicts in both countries are usually placed on early intervention schemes and also placed on round the clock treatment; when drug offenders are taken to the court of law in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, they are most likely to be sentenced based on the amount of drugs found with them at the time of their arrests.

They both also have an intervention scheme like educative programs that is basically focused on youngsters. These programs are set up to school these youngsters to desist from drugs and enlighten them about the dangers of drugs. Also, both countries medical community takes over to tackle health problems that arise because of drug use. These medical conditions range from; HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C and they mostly arise because of sharing of needles and sharp objects. Drug addicts are also helped to get back on the right track and live again

Lastly, The United Kingdom and the Netherlands drug policy are prohibitive in nature. They both clamor for educating youngsters about drug abuse and also preventing drug use and circulation in the society. The United Kingdom and Netherlands also handle drug abuse and addiction as an health issue rather than as delinquency, though in some cases people are jailed but it is used as a last resort. These two countries focus on the harm these illicit drugs causes to individuals like health problems and antisocial behavior. They also focus on the ills the se illicit drugs cost the society like the costs of healthcare, costs of policing the society and crimes relating to drugs.

## **Key Differences**

The United Kingdom's drug policy approach is basically prohibitionist while the Dutch focuses primarily on reduction of harm. The Dutch argues that it's not good to criminalize something, that if you do, you will lose the power to regulate it. That's why their criminal justice system doesn't criminalize the sale of marijuana. Netherlands are widely famous for their tolerant attitude towards marijuana which is known as "gedogen" in their local parlance. There's some tolerate to smoke marijuana as a recreational drug but it still has its limits. This has made them to regulate the drug. In sharp contrast to the United Kingdom beliefs, tobacco and alcohol are classified as recreational drugs while smoking marijuana is "criminalized" unlike in the Netherlands. But in the Netherlands, if you smoke weed and you get violent by hurting someone or harassing your neighbor, then it's going to be a criminal act and no longer tolerated. One is not also permitted in Netherlands to drive under influence (DUI), they have a tougher penalty for this in sharp contrast to the United Kingdom's "slap on the wrist" law for offenders of DUI.

In the Netherlands, "coffee shops" pubs sell Indian hemp. Once you are 18years and above, you are allowed legally to purchase up to 5grammes of marijuana in a day. In contrast, anyone who is above the age of 18 can also purchase alcohol and tobacco which is without limits daily.

Lastly, the sale of Indian hemp is retailed in the Netherlands just like the sale of alcohol and cigarettes are retailed in United Kingdom. In both countries, they also sell varieties of these products "legally".

## **The Roles of the Criminal Justice System in the United Kingdom**

Firstly, the criminal justice system of both countries is mostly based on pragmatism, treatment and sensibility and this is interwoven around the police, courts, prisons, the probation service and the offenders.

In reducing the demand or crave for illicit drugs, the United Kingdom drug policy advocates for a pro-active stance which is preventive in nature and this entails; educative measures where Young people will be schooled about the pros and cons of illicit drugs and alcohol. Early intervention for the society focusing especially on youngsters. Families and the vulnerable in the society are also taken into consideration in this pro-active measure. Radical support for the youngsters who are already addicted to drugs and alcohol and any other social and emotional issue, they will be introduced to substance misuse services, youth offending, mental health and children's services that can help them prevent the escalation and dependency on drugs. The total objective is to set them free from the shackles of these addictions. Laws, conviction and also alternative to sentencing other than incarceration are also fathomed out in the early stages by the criminal justice system: The criminal justice system will work in tandem with the court of law to identify other means to tackle drug or alcohol addiction other than sentencing and incarceration. But for some recalcitrant offenders, they have to be put behind bars. Drug Rehabilitation Requirements (DPR) also assist the court of law with programs like offender management, treatment and testing which is community based. Furthermore, the criminal justice system will restrict supply by mainly going after dealers, by this approach; they hope to break the chain between the "supplier" and the "user". They will engage in law enforcement reforms, integrated local enforcement, reducing drug supply in prisons, intelligence gathering whereby information is shared across police forces in other to know how drug users operate and those involved. Internet sales of drugs will also be tracked down and cracked, money is the driver for organized crime so these monies will be followed and the assets of drug dealers seized. International partnership will also be strengthened.

Lastly, building recoveries in communities. This clearly shows that the criminal justice system is treatment oriented and not punitive Recovery will involve; well-being of the individuals, citizenship and dependence from drugs. These recovery modes will be supported by recovery networks and will also encompass, keeping children safe and rebuilding families.

## **The Roles of the Criminal Justice System in the Netherlands**

Though a lot of people think marijuana is legal in Dutch but that's far from the truth but small quantities of marijuana is allowed to be sold to the public by licensed vendors in "coffee shop" who can't sell more than 5grammes to an individual who is above 18years per day. The main focus of Holland's drug policy is to reduce harm posed by the drugs, the criminal justice system limits the damage that comes with usage of drug by normalization which means they don't allow these drug users to be stigmatized and marginalized. The criminal justice system also makes a clear distinction between hard and soft drugs markets and they make sure marijuana users are not exposed to criminals and more dangerous, addictive substances.

The Dutch criminal justice system believes that legislation should only be applied where there is reason to interfere. In the Netherland's criminal justice system, there is a policy of gedogen ("tolerance") which is the practice of discriminatory enforcement. The law doesn't totally tolerate marijuana. If a marijuana smoker causes social problems like harassment or hurting someone else, then the full weight of the criminal justice system will be applied. In Dutch, there is "hard" and "soft" drugs. Those are their two classifications of drugs and hard drugs include heroin, cocaine and ecstasy and it is widely believed that these hard drugs pose a threat to the health of the society while Cannabis is classified as a soft drug.

Soft drug is allowed to be sold and consumed by people above 18 years .The criminal justice system doesn't prosecute every offence, but those relating to hard drugs, cultivation and trafficking are prioritized. Furthermore, priority is given to those who may want to constitute nuisance in the society due to drug use and the criminal justice system also disrupts organized crime. Though they are seen as liberal, there is a high level of social control. Generally their approach is thoroughly pragmatic and the criminal justice system is very effective in solving social problems that arise from time to time.

## **In Conclusion**

I believe the Netherland's drug legislation is very creative unlike the United Kingdom's drug policy. I think when it comes to the United Kingdom's drug policy that tends to be prohibitive in nature; it has caused lots of harm to the society it is trying to protect. There are even drugs known as "legal highs" that youngsters take and this drug hasn't been classified yet and there's no telling the harm these drugs can cause to the mental and economic life of the society. The Netherlands' drug legislation is an invention of the society which is known in local parlance as "gedogen" (tolerance), this model talks about the merits and demerits of trying to control drugs market by regulating it but I believe it's a better substitute to the prohibitive stance of the United Kingdom. The rates of death in the Netherlands that arise from abuse of drug are considerable lower than the United Kingdom's own. In the Netherlands, because pills are tested by the government, this has helped to prevent avoidable deaths, risks reduction and intelligence gathering for the government. This has generally helped in their harm reduction approach to the drug abuse fiasco in the society while the United Kingdom ecstasy pill has caused lots of deaths.

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