
THE DANISH HARM REDUCTION MODEL



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OUTLINE

1. Epidemiological data about drug use and drug problems in Denmark
2. Modern Danish drug policy
3. The different elements of Danish harm reduction policy
4. The current status of Danish drug policy



Prevalence of cannabis use, Lifetime prevalence (%), All adults (15-64)

(Source: EMCDDA)

Country	Year	Sample size	Males	Females	Total
Czech Republic	2013	868	29,6	15,8	22,8
Denmark	2013	10470	42,8	29,7	35,6
Germany	2012	9084	27,6	18,6	23,1
Ireland	2011	5128	33,2	17,5	25,3
Spain	2013	23136	37,9	22,7	30,4
France	2014	13488	49,1	33	40,9
Italy *	2012	18898	27,2	17	21,7
Netherlands *	2009	5769	32,9	18,4	25,7
United Kingdom *	2013	21691	35,1	24,9	29,9
Norway	2013	1790	28,1	18,3	23,3



Prevalence of drug use. Cannabis. Last year prevalence (%). All adults (15-64)

(Source: EMCDDA)

Country	Year	Sample size	Males	Females	Total
Belgium	2008	6792	7,2	3,2	5,1
Czech Republic	2013	868	13,2	4,5	8,9
Denmark	2013	10470	9,2	5,1	6,9
Estonia	2008	1401	8,3	3,8	6
Ireland	2011	5128	9,1	2,9	6
Spain	2013	23136	12,9	5,4	9,2
France	2014	13488	15	7,4	11,1
Netherlands *	2009	5769	9,8	4,2	7
United Kingdom *	2013	21691	9,1	4,1	6,6
Norway	2013	1790	7,2	2,8	5,1



DRUG USE IN DENMARK

(SOURCE: NATIONAL BOARD OF HEALTH)

Used cannabis	1994 (n=2521)	2000 (n=6878)	2005 (n=4440)	2008 (n=2219)	2010 (n=5748)	2013 (n=5013)
Last month	2,4	4,3	4,0	3,5	3,5	4,6
Last year	7,4	9,8	8,4	9,1	8,9	12,2
Ever	37,2	42,4	46,1	45,1	41,5	44,2

Used other drugs	1994	2000	2005	2008	2010	2013
Last month	0,2	1,2	1,1	1,1	0,9	1,0
Last year	0,5	3,4	2,7	3,6	2,4	2,6
Ever	4,4	11,3	13,5	13,4	12,5	13,6



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PROBLEMATIC DRUG USERS AND DRUG USERS IN TREATMENT

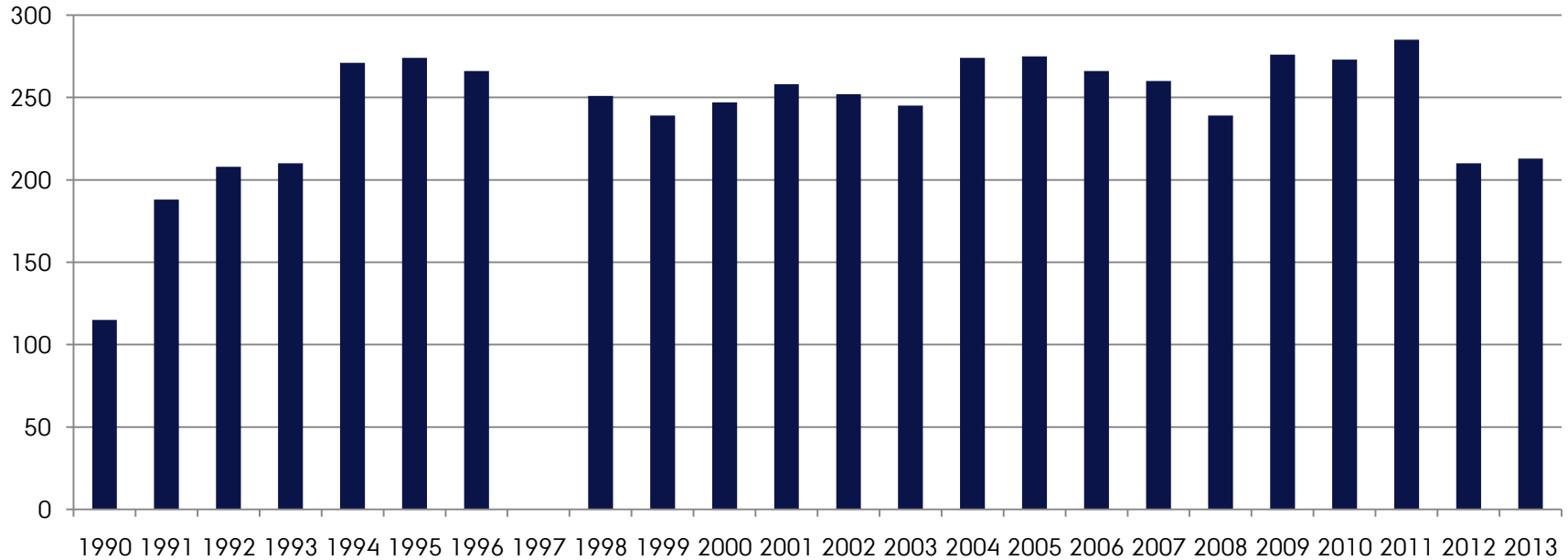
- Problematic drug users: 33.000 (2009)
- Injecting drug users: 13.000 (2009)
- Problematic drug users with cannabis as main drug: 10.900 (2009)

- Drug users in treatment: 16.200 (2011)
- Substitution treatment: 7.050 (2011)

- (Source: National Board of Health, 2014)



Drug related deaths in Denmark 1990-2013



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HIV AND HEPATITIS

Intravenous drug users with HIV: estimated 5%

14-24 new HIV cases a year for the past 10 years (4-9% of all new cases)

Intravenous drug users with Hepatitis C: estimated 75%

Intravenous drug users with Hepatitis B: estimated 35%

(Source: National Board of Health, 2014)

Since 2007 a national prevention program with regular screening for hepatitis A, B and C and HIV and vaccination against hepatitis A and B.



MODERN DANISH DRUG POLICY

- 1955: Law on Euphoriant Substances: criminalize possession of illicit drugs for own use
- 1960s-1970s: Problematic drug use constructed and treated as a *social problem*
- 1969: new section in penal code against professional drug trafficking and drug dealing
- 1969: de-penalization of possession of illicit drugs for own use
- Dual drug policy as ideological basis for Danish drug policy:
 - Supply reduction through criminal justice policy
 - Demand reduction through welfare policy



1984: INTRODUCING HARM REDUCTION

- 1970s-1980s: growing population of 'old' problematic drug users
- Excluded from/not seeking drug treatment, excluded from social services for marginalized citizens
- Increasing number getting methadone prescriptions from general practitioners
- 1984: National Advisory Council on Drug Policy recommends a change of treatment policy from primarily abstinence-oriented to *graduated goals*:
 - Reduce burdens and harms – increase resources of drug users
 - Provide help, care and treatment also to active drug users
 - Methadone maintenance treatment as treatment instrument
 - Harm reduction/graduated goals as a means to combat *social exclusion* of drug users



METHADONE MAINTENANCE TREATMENT

1970s: MMT dismissed as 'medicalization' of a social problem

1970s-1980s: general practitioners prescribing methadone

1984-1986: MMT accepted in principle, but not in practice

1986-1988: treatment system forced to accept MMT as treatment modality

1986/88-1998: ambivalence towards MMT, strict rules, sanctions – continued methadone prescriptions from general practitioners

1998: public monopoly on medical drug treatment

1998-2015: quality standards for medical drug treatment, monitoring and auditing systems, mandatory prescription guidelines, 'treatment guarantee' including choice of treatment doctor



NEEDLE EXCHANGE

First needle exchange programs during the 1980s in larger cities

Provided by treatment institutions, social services, chemists and 'on the spot' (Copenhagen)

2013 evaluation ('Street Lawyer'): 2/3 of Danish municipalities have needle exchange programs – includes the largest cities

In municipalities with no needle exchange programs injection equipment can be purchased from chemists



HEROIN ASSISTED TREATMENT (HAT)

Debated from early 1990s to 2009 when legislation allowed HAT in Denmark – no prior trial
HAT in four Danish cities

Evaluation 2013 (NBH):

- 252 clients 2010-2012
- 70 clients left treatment
- Positive results:
 - Significant reduction of risk-behaviour and use of illicit drugs
 - Significant reduction of infections etc.
 - Reduced criminal activities
 - Improved social conditions



DRUG CONSUMPTION FACILITIES

Debated from early 1990s to 2012 when legislation allowed drug consumption facilities

Today drug consumption facilities in three cities

Evaluated in 2015 (Ministry of Health)

- 2012-2014: 4.372 unique users – 2014 alone: 3.564 unique users
- 2012-2014: 355.255 instances of drug consumption – 2014 alone: 199.075 instances
- 301 overdoses treated, no fatal overdoses
- Significant reduction of public drug use
- 70-80% reduction of drug related litter (Copenhagen)
- Issues about location of drug consumption facilities



CURRENT STATUS OF DANISH DRUG POLICY

- 2004: Amendment of drug legislation repealed de-penalization of possession of illicit drugs for own use and introduced zero-tolerance policy on possession of drugs
- Drug policy as distributing risks and resources (Benoit 2003; Houborg & Bjerge 2011).
- Increased criminalization of already marginalized group: unemployed young men on social benefits with only basic education – the same group from which most problematic drug users have been recruited since the 1960s
- Improved treatment, increased entitlements and access to varied forms of harm reduction services for problematic drug users – to a large extent driven by a ‘medicalization’
- Today Danish drug policy treats drug users as either ‘sick’ or ‘criminal’, the understanding of drug use and drug users as a ‘normal social problem’ is no longer as significant as it used to be





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