Open letter of support for changes in Polish drug policy

Law ought to be created rationally – in line with scientific data not stereotypes, with practical experience not mythology. Excessive repression is not conducive to solving social problems, often it escalates them. It preserves public opinion’s fears and reinforces harmful prejudice.

Drug policy is a complex field where criminal issues intersect with matters of public health. To our belief, too much emphasis is placed on punishment and repression in Poland, instead of catering for education, prevention and effective treatment. An efficacious harm reduction approach to drug policy has to respect the broad social context – we must not forget that punishment (especially imprisonment) results in much greater harms – both individual and social, than the act itself.

Punishing people for possessing minor quantities of psychoactive substances makes treating dependent people harder and puts occasional users at risk of coming into contact with law enforcement agencies – and, in the worst case, with demoralized criminals in prisons. The experience of many countries also shows that punishing for possession does not help to decrease illicit drug consumption. It distracts the attention and energy of the police from the real originators of the problem: mass producers and major and minor drug dealers.

With regards to the above, we would like to declare our support for the initiative to introduce article number 62a into Polish anti-drug law. Under defined circumstances it will entitle prosecutors and judges to discontinue legal proceedings against the accused for possessing minor quantities of psychoactive substances “for personal use”.

List of signatories

- Paweł Althamer – critical artist
- Dr Marek Balicki – psychiatrist, former polish Minister of Health
- Prof. Zygmunt Bauman – sociologist
- Edwin Bendyk – journalist, expert on modern capitalism, public intellectual
- Prof. Agata Bielik-Robson – philosopher, Polish Academy of Science
- Halina Bortnowska – human rights activist, publisher
- Izabela Cywińska – film director, former Minister of Culture
- Artur Domosławski – journalist, writer
- Dr Kinga Dunin – sociologist, publicist, writer
- Marta Gaszyńska – Polish Drug Policy Network president
- Janusz Glowacki – writer
- Dr Agnieszka Graff – literature critic, feminist publicist, Warsaw University
- Manuela Gretkowska – writer
- Prof. Jan Tomasz Gross – sociologist, historian, Princeton University
Prof. Irena Grudzińska-Gross – literary historian, Princeton University
Agnieszka Holland – film director
Olga „Kora“ Jackowska – singer, songwriter
Prof. Maria Janion – literary historian, Polish Academy of Science
Prof. Małgorzata Kowalska – philosopher, Białystok University
Dr Sergiusz Kowalski – sociologist
Prof. Krzysztof Krajewski – legal expert
Joanna Kos-Krauze – film director
Krzysztof Krauze – film director
Roman Kurkiewicz – journalist
Aleksander Kwaśniewski – former President of Poland
Borys Lankosz – film director
Magdalena Łazarkiewicz – film director
Kasia Malinowska-Sempruch – Global Drug Policy program director, OSI
Piotr Najsztub – journalist
Dr Wojciech Olejniczak – former Minister of Agriculture
Prof. Wiktor Osiatyński – legal expert, human rights activist
Joanna Rajkowska – critical artist
Anda Rottenberg – critic of arts
Ewa Siedlecka - journalist
Kamil Sipowicz – poet, philosopher
Prof. Paweł Śpiewak – sociologist, Warsaw University
Prof. Magdalena Środa – philosopher, Warsaw University
Kazimiera Szczuka – literary critic, journalist
Małgorzata Szumowska – film director
Olga Tokarczuk – writer
Dr Ewa Woydyło – psychologist
Jacek Żakowski – publicist