

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 Głowacki – 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 Najstüb – 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 Woydyłło – psychologist
- Jacek Żakowski – publicist