

<http://www.france24.com/en/20121016-france-restates-ayrault-anti-cannabis-stance-criticism-peillon-legalisation-drugs-marijuana>

LATEST UPDATE: 16/10/2012

- [DRUGS](#) - [FRANCE](#) - [JEAN-MARC AYRAULT](#) - [LAW](#)

France restates anti-cannabis stance after criticism

France's Socialist government reiterated its opposition to decriminalising marijuana Monday after Education Minister Vincent Peillon (pictured) said Sunday that legalisation deserved debate, sparking criticism from the right-wing opposition.

France's Socialist government was forced to reassert its opposition to legalising cannabis on Monday after the education minister drew howls of outrage by calling for a debate on the issue.

Education Minister Vincent Peillon raised the issue on Sunday, saying legalising cannabis was a "serious question" that warranted debate.

After the remarks were pounced on by France's right-wing opposition, Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault's office insisted government policy had not changed.

"The prime minister and Mr. Peillon spoke on the telephone this morning, there will be no decriminalisation of cannabis," Ayrault's office said.

In a broadcast organised by France Inter radio, Le Monde and AFP, Peillon had said: "This question is worth asking, and I am amazed sometimes by how France is a bit behind on this subject, which for me is important."

After coming under fire for the remarks, Peillon issued a statement saying his comments reflected his "personal opinion" and were in no way "contrary to the complete and total solidarity" within the government.

Former prime minister Francois Fillon of the right-wing UMP called Peillon's remarks "irresponsible and dangerous", saying: "The ban on consuming cannabis in France remains more than ever necessary to protect our children."

UMP party leader Jean-Francois Cope called on President Francois Hollande to react to the minister's statements.

"The legalisation of so-called soft drugs is simply unacceptable," Cope said on France Info radio, citing "dozens and dozens of researchers around the world" who have pointed to the dangerous effects of smoking cannabis.

The controversy highlighted what critics say is increasing confusion and disorganisation within the government formed after Hollande won the presidency in May, which saw the Socialists take power for the first time in a decade.

(AFP)

<http://www.france24.com/en/20110616-french-cannabis-debate-cul-de-sac-legalisation-consumption-marijuana-parliament-report>

LATEST UPDATE: 16/06/2011

- [DRUGS](#) - [FRANCE](#) - [LAW](#)

Is France's cannabis debate stuck in a cul-de-sac?

A new parliamentary report recommends legalising the cultivation and consumption of cannabis in France. But one leading critic of international drug policy doubts that the debate will inspire a sea change in French policy.

By [Tony Todd](#) (text)

The issue of legalising cannabis is once again making headlines in France following the release of a parliamentary report on Wednesday recommending that the drug should be subject to “controlled legalisation”.

The report, compiled by an opposition working party, recommends that the cultivation and sale of marijuana should become a state-controlled activity, like the sale of alcohol and tobacco, and concluded that the government could not continue to “advocate the illusion of abstinence”.

The report has some support within the opposition Socialist Party, although two Socialist candidates for next year’s presidential campaign, Ségolène Royal and Manuel Valls, have spoken out against the proposal.

The conservative ruling UMP party has largely rejected the findings, the party consensus being that legalising or decriminalising cannabis would increase the number of users and that traffickers would move into distributing harder drugs.

French inflexibility

According to a leading critic of international drug control policies, the legalisation debate -- which is raised in France regularly -- is unlikely to gain much ground because of France’s inherently inflexible, top-down political system.

Ethan Nadelmann, founder of the US-based [Drug Policy Alliance](#), welcomed the report, but was not optimistic that France would adopt the kinds of policies that have led to decriminalisation in countries like Holland and Portugal.

In Switzerland and Germany, he argued, local initiatives had paved the way for a change in political attitudes. While drugs remain illegal in these countries, addiction is often seen more as a health problem than a criminal activity.

Not so in France, Nadelmann said, where policymaking tends to come from the higher political echelons and where “there is much less opportunity for local innovation and citizen activism”.

Prohibition 'has never worked'

Psychiatrist Alain Rigaud, head of the French National Association for the Prevention of Alcoholism and Drug Addiction, said he believed prohibition had proved to be counterproductive and called for the debate to be taken seriously.

“Prohibition does not work and has never worked,” he said. “Decriminalisation does not augment consumption -- that is a mistaken assumption made by politicians who advocate prohibition.”

“Look at the Netherlands -- cannabis is decriminalised there and consumption has not exploded,” Rigaud said. “Portugal, where one is allowed to carry cannabis for personal consumption, has one of the lowest consumption rates in Europe.”

France, on the other hand, is one of Europe’s biggest cannabis consumers. It also has some of the toughest anti-drug laws. The country has 1.2 million regular cannabis users (smoking more than 10 times a month) and 3.9 million occasional users (at least once a year). That figure has quadrupled since 1990.

<http://www.france24.com/en/20110602-international-commission-brands-war-drugs-failure-richard-branson-usa>

LATEST UPDATE: 02/06/2011

- [DRUGS](#)

‘War on Drugs’ has failed, says global commission

An international commission made up of serving and former heads of state, in addition to former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, has branded the “War on Drugs” a failure and called for a major review of drugs policy.

By [Tony Todd](#) (text)

An international commission has declared the “War on Drugs” a failure, while urging governments to consider legalising marijuana in an effort to undermine the drugs cartels, reduce prison populations and improve public health.

In a [report](#) issued on Thursday the [Global Commission on Drug Policy](#) called for “experimentation by governments with models of legal regulation of drugs.”

The 19-member panel includes Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou, Colombian President Cesar Gaviria as well as former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and British businessman Richard Branson.

“Vast expenditures on criminalisation and repressive measures directed at producers, traffickers and consumers of illegal drugs have clearly failed to effectively curtail supply or consumption,” the commission said.

“Government expenditures on futile supply reduction strategies and incarceration displace more cost-effective and evidence-based investments in demand and harm reduction” the report added.

The report also said that finding a new direction in policy “applies especially to cannabis....but we also encourage other experiments in decriminalisation and legal regulation.

The United States came in for particular criticism. The members of the commission insist that Washington must change its anti-drug policies from being guided by anti-crime approaches to ones rooted in health care and human rights.

"We hope this country (the U.S.) at least starts to think there are alternatives," former Colombian president Cesar Gaviria told The Associated Press by phone.

"We don't see the U.S. evolving in a way that is compatible with our (countries') long-term interests."

However the US Government was quick to criticise the group's findings and defend their prohibition policies.

"Legalisation remains a non-starter in the Obama Administration," the White House said in a statement, adding that the long-term anti-drugs policy had significantly reduced illicit drug use in the USA while arguing that legalising cannabis would have little impact on the cartels' activities.

'The emperor has no clothes'

But the head of a leading US organisation, which advised the commission, said Thursday's report could open the door to a more open debate, amid a climate in which publicly supporting calls for a relaxation of anti-drug laws often spells professional suicide for politicians.

"The commission's statement is like the child in the story who stands up and yells that the emperor is wearing no clothes," Ethan Nadelmann of the [Drug Policy Alliance](#) told FRANCE 24.

"The high-profile nature of the members of the panel, and the strong message that they have sent out, gives an extra degree of encouragement and safety to politicians who want to speak out" Mr Nadelmann added.

In a statement, former Colombian President Cesar Gaviria added that "now is the time to break the taboo on discussion of all drug policy options, including alternatives to drug prohibition."

The panel also called for a review into the nature of drug addiction, saying that drug users should be offered medical treatment rather than being criminalised and punished for their actions.

The report added that the vast amounts of money spent on incarcerating users and trying to stem the flow of drugs would be better spent fighting violent organised crime and drug traffickers.

Several European members of the commission said that policy changes in Portugal, Germany, Switzerland and other countries showed that a change from criminalising drug users to offering them treatment and support them has reduced drug-related deaths and had either stabilised or reduced drug use.

<http://www.france24.com/en/20101103-californians-reject-proposal-legalise-marijuana-usa-proposition-19>

LATEST UPDATE: 03/11/2010

- [DRUGS](#) - [LAW](#) - [USA](#)

Californians reject proposal to legalise marijuana

Californians have rejected a proposal to make the US state the first to fully legalize marijuana, voting by 57 percent against to 43 percent in favour. Proposition 19 was one of several referendums held during midterm polls on Tuesday.

By [News Wires](#) (text)

AFP - Californians rejected Tuesday a proposal to make their famously laid-back US state the world's first to fully legalize marijuana -- with outgoing governor Arnold Schwarzenegger among those against.

The so-called Proposition 19 -- one of a series of referendums held at the same time as mid-term polls -- were rejected by 57 percent against 43 percent in favor, said CNN, while Fox News and the LA Times also forecast a No vote.

Growing and selling marijuana for medicinal purposes has been legal here since 1996, but backers of legalizing it totally -- including consumption, cultivation and trade -- campaigned hard for "Prop 19" to be passed.

The proposal would have allowed people aged 21 and over to possess up to one ounce (28 grams) of marijuana and grow up to 25 square feet (2.32 square meter) of pot plants.

Supporters of the measure -- which drew widespread backing among the young, but opposition from older voters -- sought to put a brave face on the ballot defeat.

"The fact that millions of Californians voted to legalize marijuana is a tremendous victory," said Richard Lee, proponent of the referendum proposal, adding that he would mount a similar bid two years from now.

"We have broken the glass ceiling. Prop. 19 has changed the terms of the debate and that was a major strategic goal."

"With limited resources this time around we were able to build an enormously powerful coalition.... This coalition will only continue to grow in size and strength as we prepare for 2012."

Large-scale commercial cultivation -- and its taxation -- could also have been allowed, though implementing such a rule would have been left to the discretion of local municipal and county authorities.

Prop 19 supporters included a broad range of politicians, unions and rights groups -- as well as billionaire philanthropist George Soros, who backed the "Yes" campaign with a million dollars of his own money.

Despite the support, a recent opinion poll showed the no vote ahead by 49 percent to 44 percent -- an unexpected blow for the Yes campaign, which has led surveys for months.

Opponents included all the main candidates to succeed Schwarzenegger as California governor -- including the victorious Democrat Jerry Brown -- and for the state's two Senate seat races, as well as US Attorney General Eric Holder.

The former film star Schwarzenegger, a Republican but known as socially liberal, revealed on his Twitter page after voting closed that he was among those who rejected the marijuana proposals.

US federal statistics show nearly seven percent of the state's 37-million strong population smoke cannabis at least once a month.

The proposal has also drawn international criticism.

Last month Latin American leaders meeting in Colombia said the United States could not at the same time "promote penalizing this kind of activity in other countries and authorize the legalization of drug production on their own territory."

US authorities had warned a yes vote could greatly complicate their war on drugs.

But proponents argued that legalizing marijuana could throw a spanner in a very lucrative market for Mexican drug traffickers, who are fighting a brutal drug war for control of trafficking routes into the United States that has claimed over 28,000 lives in nearly four years.

