

Irish National Focal Point to EMCDDA

Use of data in public debate on
alternative approaches to the
possession of drugs for person use

Policy context

- New policy on possession of drugs for personal use – 02 August 2019
- Health diversion approach
- Drugs not decriminalised
- Third and further offences treated within criminal justice system



Policy context

- 2015 Drugs Minister supports decriminalisation
- 2015 Parliamentary Justice Committee visits Portugal
- 2015 Supervised Injecting Facility approved by government
- 2017 New drugs strategy and setting up of working group
- 2019 Working Group reports and presents recommendations

Method

- Cross sectional study of contributions to debate
 - NGO and civil society organisations
 - Media
 - Parliamentary debates
 - Policy documents

Method

Searching

- Parliamentary and committee debates
 - Websites: drugandalcohol.ie, oirachtas.ie, kildarestreet.ie
- Media
 - Website: drugsandalcohol.ie (NFP repository)
- Government reports
 - Irish parliament library OPAC
- Civil society position papers and public events

Parliament and media

- Debates in lower house and Senate
- Parliamentary committee debates
- Parliamentary committee reports

NGO and civil society organisations

- Conferences and seminars
- Special website
- Publications

Citywide website

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL citywide.ie/decriminalisation/. The page header includes the CityWide logo (Drugs Crisis Campaign) and a navigation menu with items: DRUGS IN IRELAND, DECRIMINALISATION (highlighted), WHAT WE DO, PUBLICATIONS, and NEWS. Social media icons for Twitter, Facebook, and a search icon are also present. The main content area features the title "Decriminalisation Evidence Base" and two paragraphs of text. A central image shows a gavel and marijuana. A highlighted box contains a key statistic: "In 2018 there were 13,445 recorded offences for possession of drugs for personal use in Ireland. This figure represents 73% of all drugs offences for that year." To the right, a "SHARE" section with social media icons and a "Decriminalisation" sidebar menu are visible. The sidebar menu includes links to: How Criminalisation Impacts Globally, Current Situation in Ireland, Impacts of Decriminalisation, UN and Decriminalisation, EU position, Which Countries have Decriminalised and How?, Evidence Overviews, and FAQs.

Decriminalisation Evidence Base

It is Citywide's view that drug use should be addressed as a social and health issue rather than as a criminal justice issue. We support decriminalisation of possession of drugs for personal use. We do not believe any person should be deemed a criminal simply because he/she uses a drug. Criminalising a person for drug use can affect their whole future and can negatively impact in many aspects of their lives, including employment, training, future travel, and insurance.

We believe that addressing the social and health issues relating to drug use is a more positive and effective approach, both for the drug user and for wider society. Decriminalisation is not a panacea for problem drug use, and it will require resources and investment, however, it is clear that the consequences of drug use are made worse by addressing them through the criminal justice system rather than the health system.

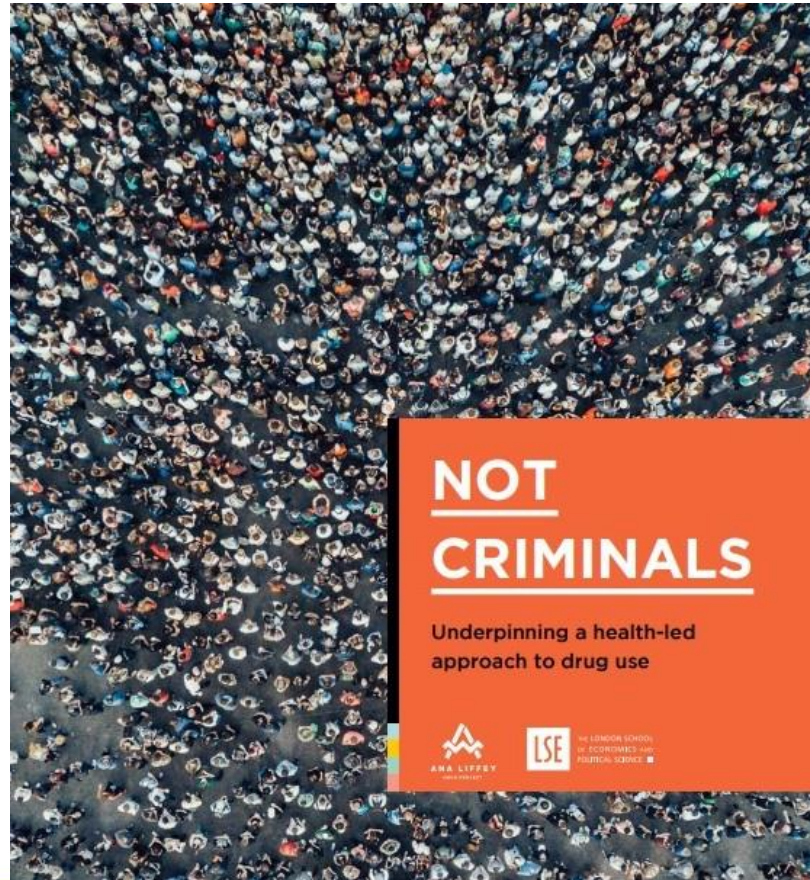
In 2018 there were 13,445 recorded offences for possession of drugs for personal use in Ireland. This figure represents 73% of all drugs offences for that year.

Irish law defines possession of drugs for personal use as a criminal offence and decriminalisation means repeal of this law. Possession of drugs for sale or supply remains a criminal offence. The introduction of decriminalisation would provide a policy framework for our response to drug use to be implemented through a social and public health approach rather than through a criminal justice one.

Decriminalisation

- How Criminalisation Impacts Globally
- Current Situation in Ireland
- Impacts of Decriminalisation
- UN and Decriminalisation
- EU position
- Which Countries have Decriminalised and How?
- Evidence Overviews
- FAQS

Anna Liffey Drugs Project



Anna Liffey Drug Project

Criminalisation:

- Not a deterrent to future drug use
- Reduces capacity of criminal law to deter more serious offenses
- Stigmatises drug use and undermines responses

Working Group to Consider Alternatives

- Report of Working Group to Consider Alternatives – July 2019
- Recommended a range of options to government:
 - Adult Caution
 - Multiple Adult Caution
 - Diversion to Health Services

Data in working group report

Working Group to Consider Alternative Approaches to the Possession of Drugs for Personal Use:

- Prevalence, treatment demand and consequences
- Drug market, drug-related crime, including imprisonment
- Drug-related expenditure
- Costing of an alternative approach to personal drug procession

Explaining policy shifts

- Multiple streams policy model
 - Problem stream
 - Policy stream
 - Politics stream

Use of data in policy debates

- Evidence informed policy
- Values, moral and cultural beliefs
- Ideology and principle

Considerations for future debates

- More considered use of data
- What are new policy questions?
- Link health and security information systems.