

# The Dutch closed cannabis supply chain experiment: background, design of the evaluation study and challenges

Lisbon Addictions conference, 23-11-2022

**Dr. Margriet van Laar**  
**Head Drugs department & Focal Point**

**[mlaar@trimbos.nl](mailto:mlaar@trimbos.nl)**



Netherlands Institute of  
Mental Health and Addiction

Breuer  
ONDERZOEK & INTRAVALE  
ADVIES



EUROPE

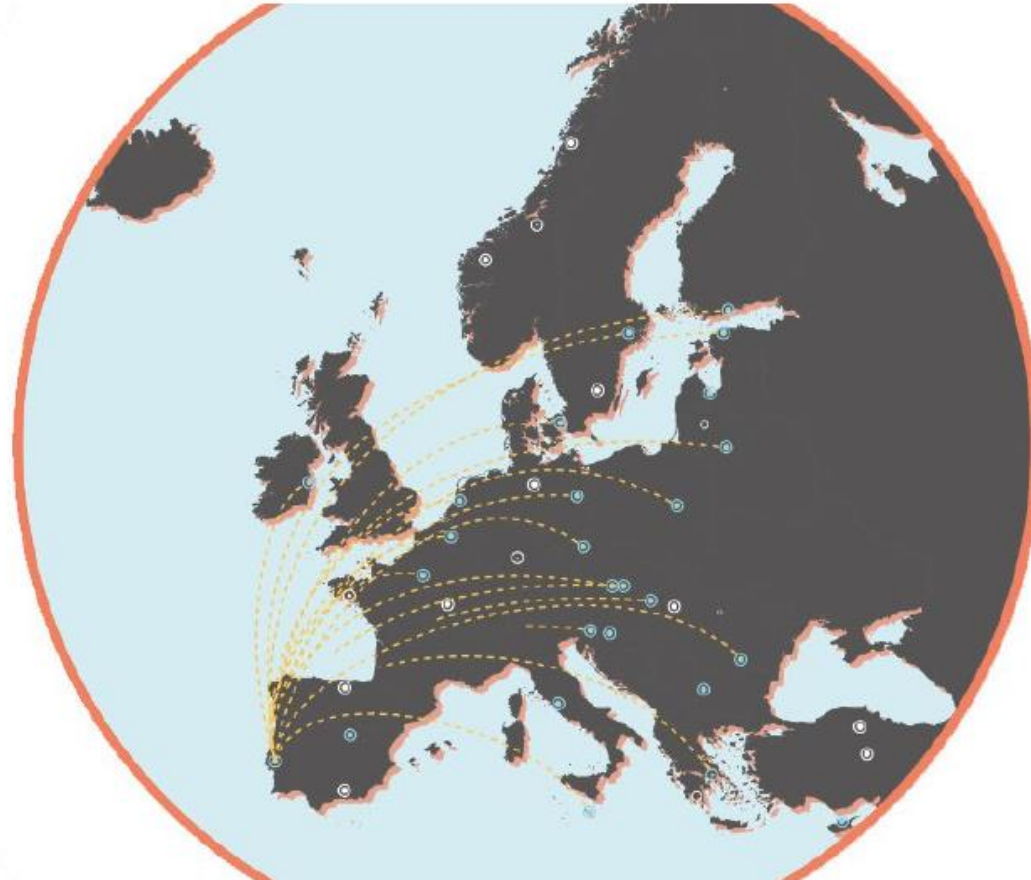


# No conflict of interests

## REITOX member

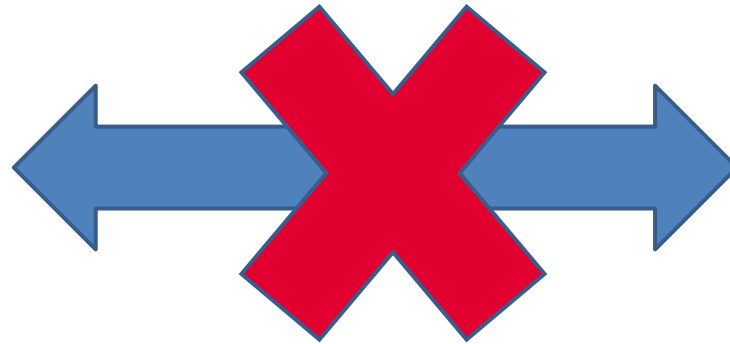
**The Trimbos Institute is the Dutch focal point for the EMCDDA**

The Trimbos Institute is a member of the European Information Network on Drugs and Drug Addiction (REITOX)





# 1976: Cannabis versus harddrugs



# Dutch Cannabis Policy

The 'back door' (illegal)



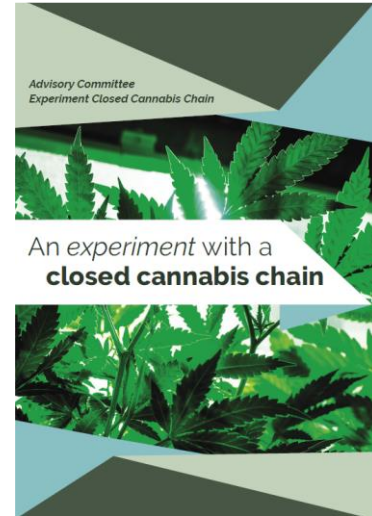
The 'front door' (tolerated)





# Aim of the “cannabis experiment”

- The aim of the experiment is to ascertain whether or not it is possible to regulate a quality-controlled supply of cannabis to coffee shops ...
- .....and to study the effects of a regulated supply chain on crime, safety, public nuisance and public health



Public Health



Criminality



Security



# THE EXPERIMENTAL INTERVENTION



- Growers must ensure that the cannabis is tested (THC/CBD) by a licensed laboratory
- They have to be able to grow > 6,500 kg per year, and >-10 varieties of cannabis
- They have to ensure security during storage, packaging and transport of the cannabis
- Strict regulations: heavy metals, microbiologicals, pesticides
- Track & Trace System



## Labelling of cannabis packages



- Information on THC and CBD content (no limits)
- Neutral packages
- Consumer information leaflet (health risks)
- Prevention requirements for coffeeshop owners

# Challenges & questions



## Supply and public health

- Will the supply meet user demand?
  - Sufficient varieties (at least 10, incl. hashish)
  - Customer satisfaction: “perceived quality”, potency, ‘taste’?
- Will prices change?
- What about ‘normalisation’ of cannabis use among young people (e.g. use and perceived risk)?
- Changes in use patterns and problematic use, incl. dependence & emergencies ?
- Push & pull effects: does the experiment attract (new) user? Or replacement to the illegal market?

## Nuisance and criminality

- Closed chain: diversion of cannabis to the illicit market?
- Is there overproduction (and what happens then)...?
- Security issues (e.g. storage of cannabis at grow locations, distribution)?
- How will the illegal market respond (change in prices, or supply of different varieties and products that are not allowed (oil, vaping products) or higher quantities?
- Will there be public nuisance at growing locations?

# Participating municipalities: intervention and control



## EXPERIMENTAL GROUP      CONTROL GROUP

**10 Intervention municipalities**      **9 Control municipalities**

<b>Total n inhabitants</b>	1,55 million	1,08 million
<b>Average inhabitants (n)</b>	155 thousand	119 thousand
<b>Total n coffeeshops</b>	79	55
<b>Number of border municipalities</b>	3	2
<b>Inhabitants per coffeshop</b>	33.0 thousand	28.7 thousand

*Comparisons are made only at group level*



# Evaluation study

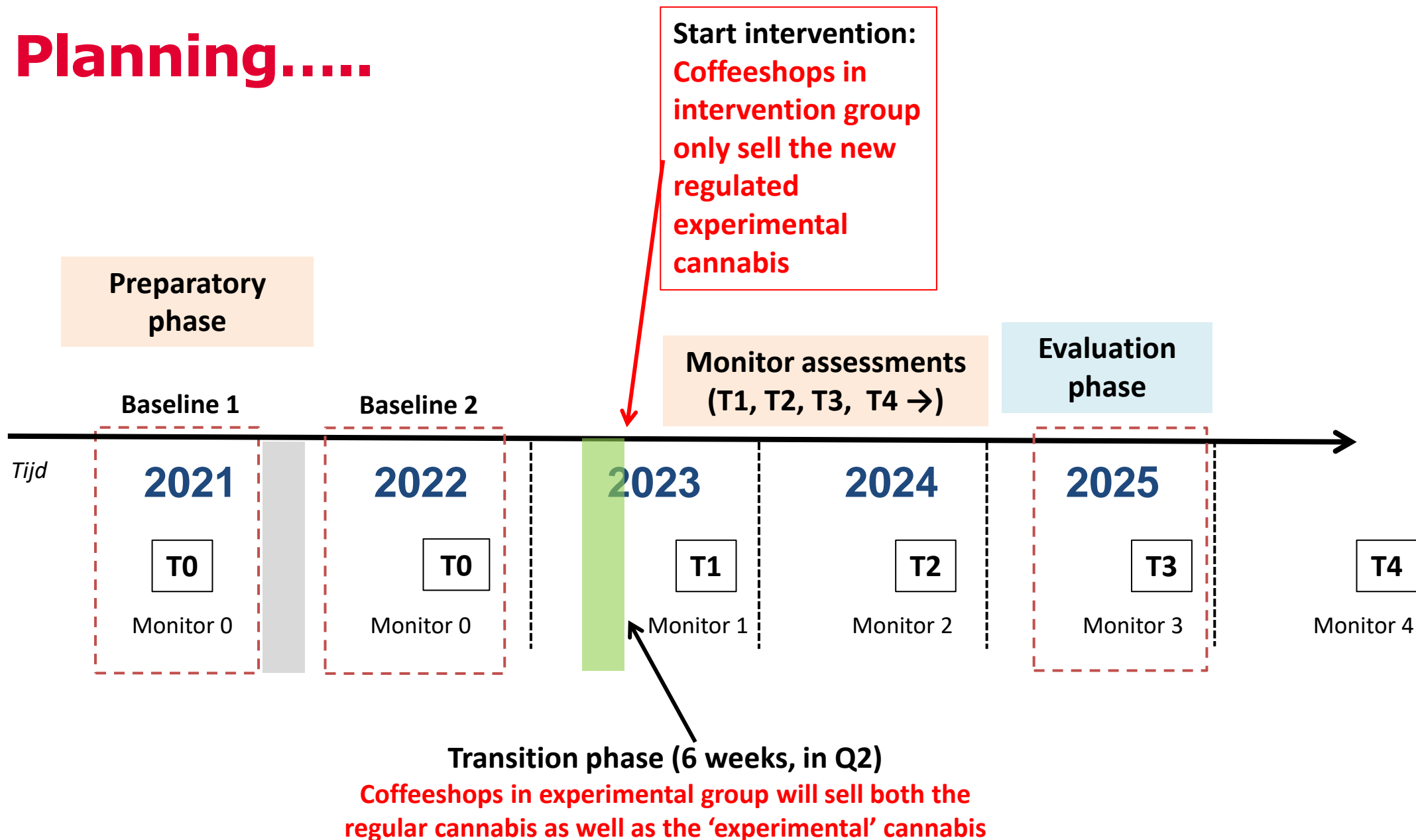
- **Quasi-experimental design** with two groups:
  - 10 intervention municipalities (experimental group)
  - 9 control municipalities (control group)

- **Three phases:**
  - **Preparatory phase** (with **baseline assessment**, followed by transition phase of 6 weeks)
  - **Monitoring phase** (after implementation of intervention with **4 annual assessments**)
  - **Evaluation phase**, with **evaluation** report

## Multi-methods (e.g.)

- Theory of Change/logic model
- Surveys among coffeeshop visitors
  - Buying behaviour, cannabis preference & satisfaction, use patterns, health indicators
- Surveys among local residents
- Chemical analysis of cannabis (THC/CBD), possibly contaminants
- Cannabis types & products sold in coffeeshops (analyses of menus)
- Interviews stakeholders
- Analyses registration data
- Online users survey (illegal market)

# Planning.....



# Delays.....

Dutch marijuana growing experiment runs into more delays

Society     October 27, 2022



- It takes more time to grow“ Sufficient Quality, Quantity and Diversity“ of cannabis (currently only one out of 10 nominated growers actually started..)
- Public Administration Probity Screening Act (Bibob Act) of potential growers took more time
- Problems of growers to find a location, obtain licenses to cultivate cannabis and to obtain a bank account
- Recent issues: staff shortages, increased energy prices, increased prices (and shortage) of building materials
- Coalition agreement (2021-2025): add a big city to the intervention group
- Some municipalities expressed their interest in having a ‘testphase’ (prior to the overall transition phase in all intervention municipalities)



# The project team

Breuer  
ONDERZOEK & INTRAVAL  
ADVIES

Trimbos  
instituut

RAND  
EUROPE

- Ralph Mennes
- (overall co-ordination)
- Irene Schoonbeek
- Ruud Roodbeen
- Margriet W. van Laar
- Karin Monshouwer
- Pieter E. Oomen
- Sander M. Rigter
- Marleen Olthof
- Stijn Hoorens
- Shann Hulme
- Emma Leenders
- Mafalda Pardal

Funded by

# For more information

- <https://www.government.nl/topics/drugs/controlled-cannabis-supply-chain-experiment>
- <https://www.government.nl/topics/drugs/documents>

Latest developments & News (in Dutch)

- <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/experiment-gesloten-coffeeshopketen-wietexperiment>
- OR *Ask me*: Margriet van Laar, mlaar@trimbos.nl

# Closed chain

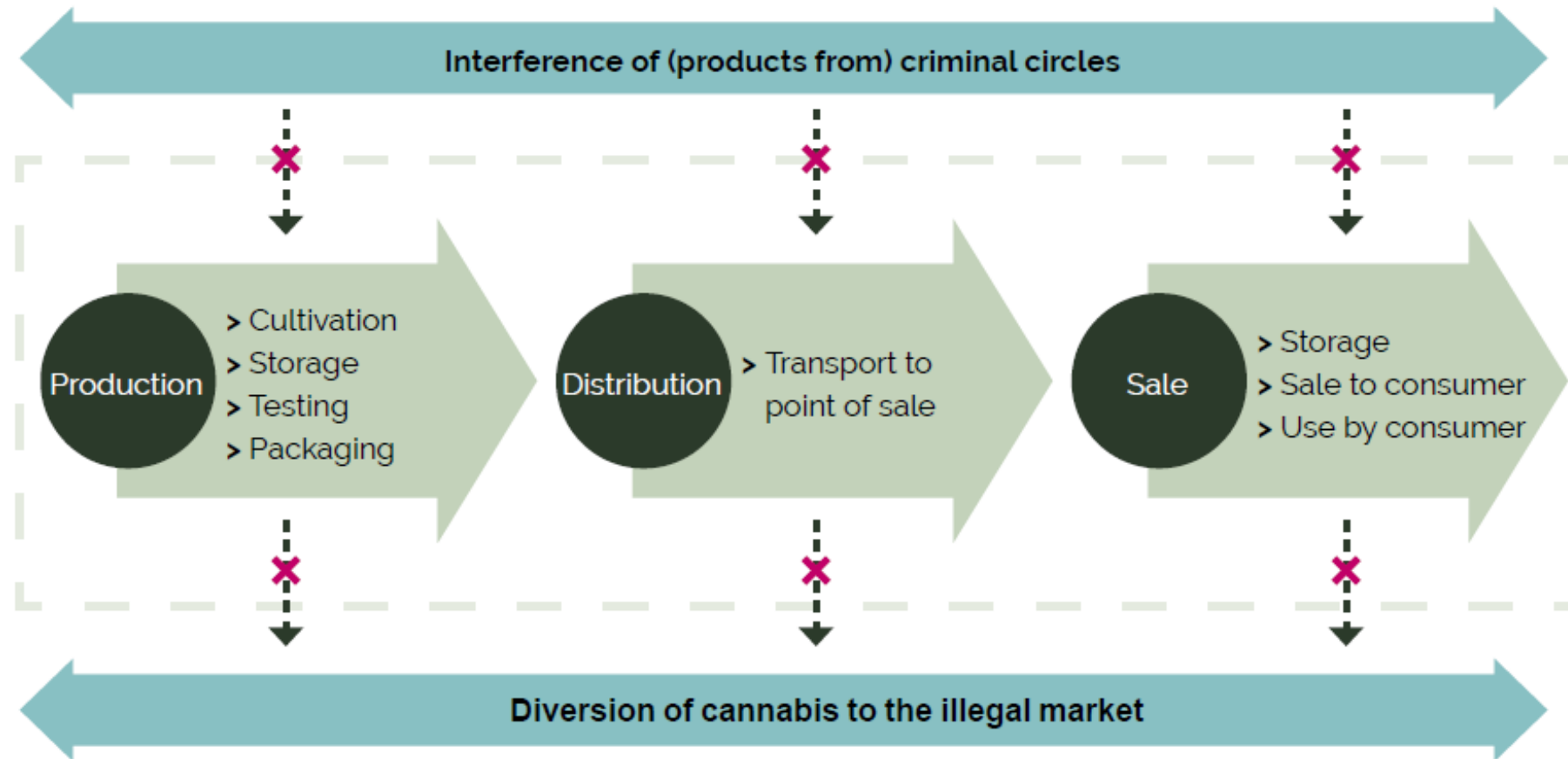


FIGURE 2. THE CLOSED CANNABIS CHAIN



# Coalition agreement 2021-2025.....

- “.... The experiments being conducted on the basis of the Controlled Cannabis Supply Chain Experiment Act will be continued **and expanded to include a major city**. In the near future criteria will be established for assessing the outcomes of the experiments in terms of crime, public health and prevention.
- The government will submit its position on the evaluation of the experiments to the House of Representatives and the Senate **in 2024.....”**

However.....