



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Federal Department of Home Affairs  
**Federal Office of Public Health**  
Prevention and Public Health Services Directorate  
Prevention of Non-communicable diseases Division

# **The Swiss pilot trials with cannabis – 1.5 years later**

**Lisbon Addictions: “Policies for regulating cannabis supply in Europe and the US: the need for appropriate monitoring and evaluation”**

**23th November 2022**

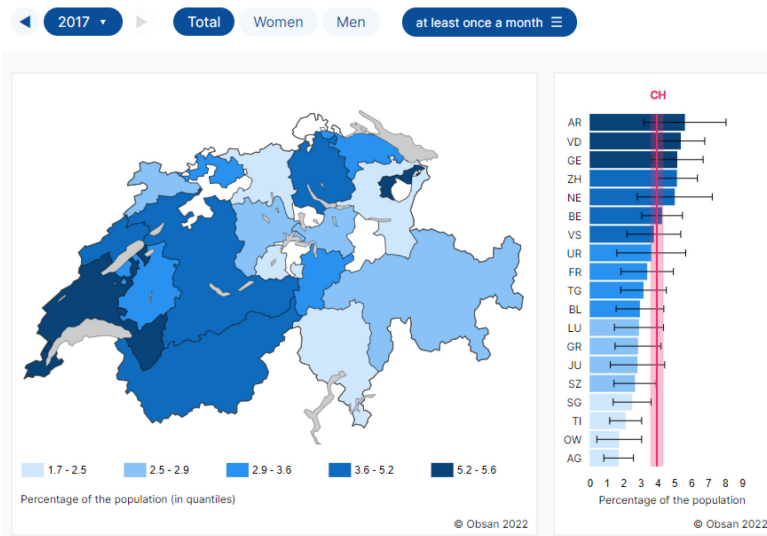


# Background: distribution of cannabis consumption in CH

- **Widespread consumption** despite prohibition
- **1/3 of the population** has tried cannabis at least once in their life
- **4%** of the population aged between 15 and 64 consumed cannabis in the **last 30 days**

## Prevalence of cannabis consumption

Percentage of the population in a private household aged 15 to 64



Source: <https://ind.obsan.admin.ch/en/indicator/monam/cannabis-consumption-age-15-64>



## Effects of prohibition of cannabis

- **Health risks** for consumers due to poor quality of the cannabis/unclear THC-content offered on the black market
- Negative consequences for consumers in terms of resocialisation, stigmatisation and discrimination due to **criminal record**
- Difficulty to **reach out to the people** consuming cannabis → lower attendance at addiction support services, more difficulties to inform about harm reduction measures



# The road to pilot trials with cannabis

- **Unsatisfactory situation** in the field of cannabis
- **International** tendencies to re-think regulation of cannabis
- Initiative of large **cities and cantons** in Switzerland to conduct scientific pilot trials with cannabis
- At first, these trials could not be authorized due to the **missing legal basis**
- → several **parliamentary motions** demanding a legal basis for pilot trials
- In fall 2020, the Parliament passed a corresponding **amendment to the Federal Narcotics Act**
- Amendment has come into force on **15 May 2021** and will remain in effect for ten years




## Aim of pilot trials






- **increase knowledge** of the advantages and disadvantages of controlled access to cannabis
- provide a sound **scientific basis** for possible decisions regarding a public-health-oriented regulation of cannabis in future
- Examine the **impact** of measures or instruments in particular of different **distribution systems** (non-profit supply, state retail, private retail)
- Gain knowledge about **acceptance of different models** by consumers and society
- → Thus, **generating evidence** in the typical Swiss-style of a step by step procedure (cp. introduction of heroin-assisted treatment in 1994)



# Pilot trial requirements – a public health framework

**CANNABIS**  
Conditions for pilot trials



-  Maximum 10g THC per month  
THC content: maximum value 20 %
-  The passing on to third parties, advertising, as well as consumption in public places prohibited
-  Age 18+, already consumer  
Medical supervision
-  Maximum 5000 participants per pilot trial  
Resident in participating Canton
-  Duration of a trial: 5 (+2) years

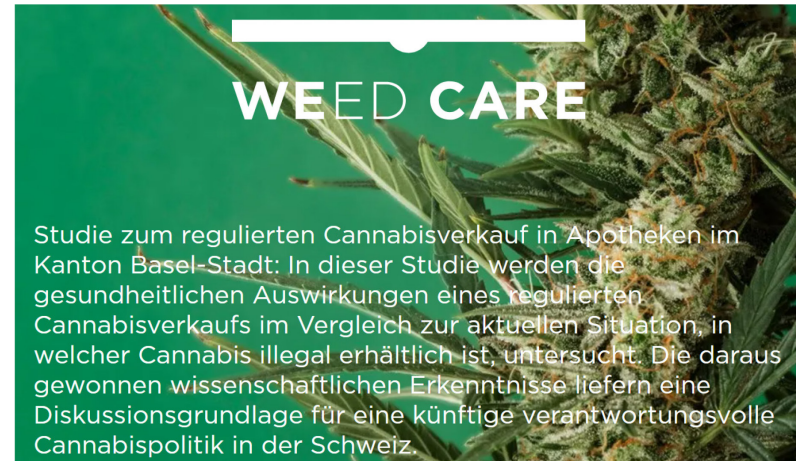
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Source: <https://www.bag.admin.ch/bag/en/home/gesund-leben/sucht-und-gesundheit/cannabis/pilotprojekte.html>



## Status today

- **One pilot trial** has been approved to date
- This pilot trial examines the **health effects** of regulated cannabis sales in pharmacies compared to the current situation where cannabis is available illegally
- Various organisers plan to **distribute** cannabis in pharmacies, cannabis social clubs, non-profit stores or online



Source: <https://www.weedcare-basel.ch/>



## 1.5 years later – first learnings

- High interest in population, long waiting lists with interested study participants
- Some issues with outdoor **organic cultivation** (high levels of fungicides, tight time-slots)
- High **political pressure** due to parallel parliamentary consultation on the legalization-initiative
- examination process **very complex and time-consuming**






# Cannabis legalisation in the political spotlight

- Meanwhile, a **parliamentary initiative** (20.473) has been accepted by the parliament
- Initiative is asking for a **legalisation** of the cannabis market
- → Thus, **evidence from the pilot trials** is needed now more than ever

20.473 PARLAMENTARISCHE INITIATIVE

Regulierung des Cannabismarktes für einen besseren Jugend- und Konsumentenschutz

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Eingereicht von:  **SIEGENTHALER HEINZ**  
Die Mitte-Fraktion, Die Mitte, EVP.  
Bürgerlich-Demokratische Partei Schweiz

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Einreichungsdatum: 25.09.2020

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Eingereicht im: Nationalrat

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Stand der Beratungen: Im Rat noch nicht behandelt

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☰ ALLES ZUKLAPPEN

☷ EINGEREICHTER TEXT

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Anbau, Produktion, Handel und Konsum von THC-haltigem Cannabis ist nach den Empfehlungen der eidgenössischen Kommission für Suchtfragen EKSF gesetzlich neu zu regeln. Dies mit folgenden Zielen:

- Das 4 Säulenmodell der schweizerischen Drogenpolitik wird berücksichtigt;
- Kontrolle der Produktion und des Handels durch staatliche Organe, insbesondere betreffend Jugendschutz, Konsumentenschutz und Information;
- Trennung von medizinischem und nicht-medizinischem Markt;
- Austrocknung des Schwarzmarktes durch Aufhebung der Prohibition;
- Regelung der Besteuerung und Bewerbung;
- Regelung des Anbaus für den persönlichen Gebrauch.

Source: <https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaefft?AffairId=20200473>



## Way forward

- Change has been **initiated**
- **Evidence** from the pilot trials will be important for future political discussions
- **First results** are not to be accepted much before 2024
- Next steps: set up a **meta-evaluation** over all pilot trials (implement core questionnaire)
- Importance of **common indicators** in order to compare trends with regard to cannabis consumption, consumption competence, cannabis knowledge (role of EMCDDA?)



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**Thank you very much for your attention!**

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me:

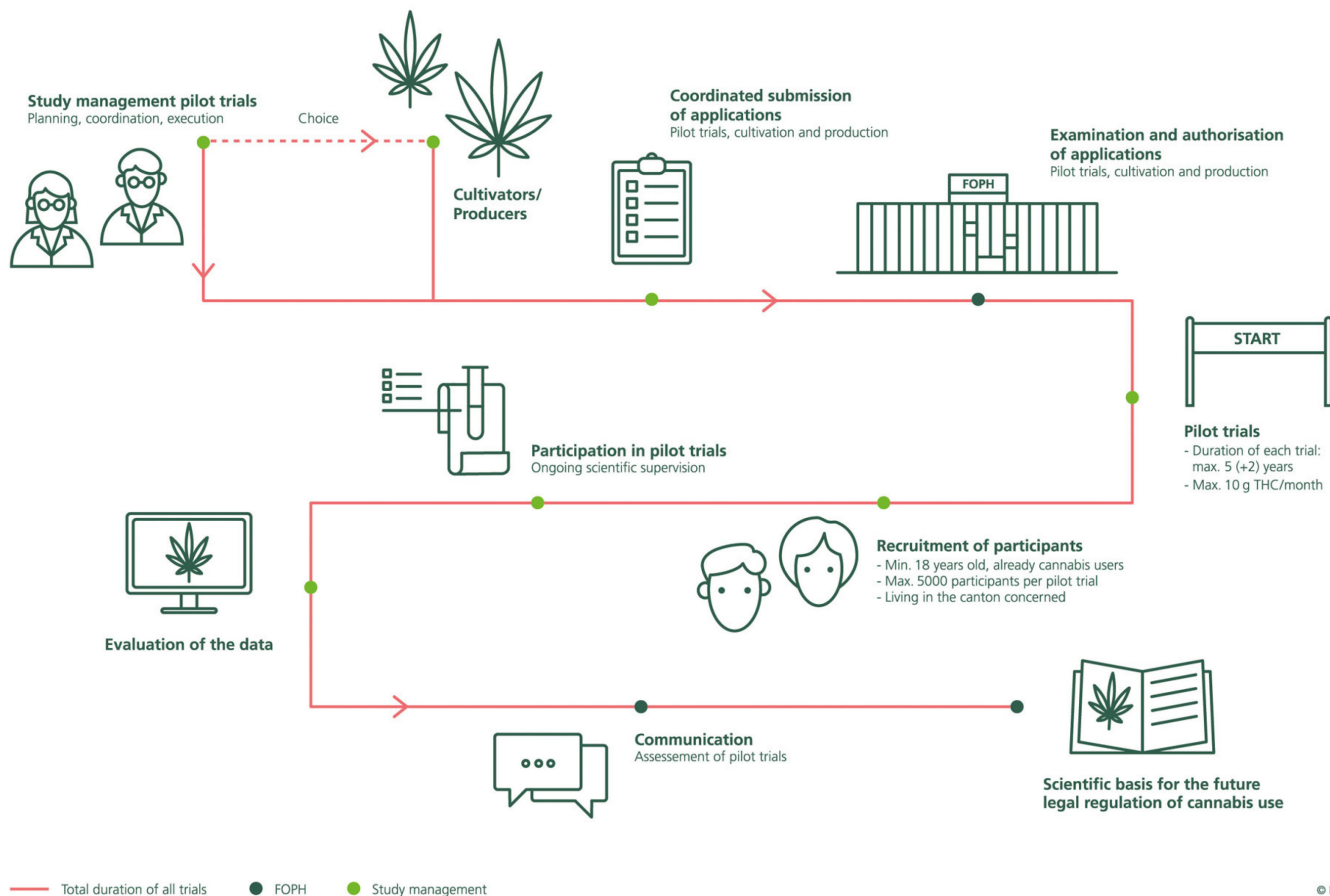
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## Procedure for cannabis pilot trials





# Strict controls from cultivation to use

- Organic cultivation
- Made in Switzerland
- Max. 20% THC-content
- No impurities
- Sealed packaging
- Requirements regarding labeling
- Adequate infrastructure for distribution
- Check on entitlement to purchase
- Personal use only, no consumption in public places

## From cultivation to use

Procedures in the production and distribution chain of Cannabis products for pilot trials

