Legalising the Drugs Trade: Reducing Crime or Increasing Addiction?

**THIS BIBLIOGRAPHY**

The British Library is providing background information and sources for further reading about each topic featured in Speakers' Corner Trust’s *Forum for Debate*.

The focus of each bibliography will be on recent work that is accessible to someone with a general interest in the topic. It does not aim to be comprehensive, and does not cover in detail works written mainly for professional and academic audiences. All of the references in this resource guide are to materials that are either available without charge through the internet, or that may be accessed at the Library reading rooms in London. Many should also be readily available through local public libraries or bookshops.

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**THE TOPIC: ‘LEGALISING THE DRUGS TRADE: REDUCING CRIME OR INCREASING ADDICTION?’ – JULY 2010**

The arguments contained in many of the books, reports and articles listed in this bibliography focus on the concept of harm. Those supporting the continued criminal status of drug use and trade point to the physical harm that drugs cause to users, and the social damage that they cause to families and communities. On an international scale, the production and trade in illegal drugs has been shown to cause widespread environmental damage, increase violence, and exacerbate the fragility of states in which drugs are produced or are transited. Opponents of legalisation and decriminalisation doubt the ability of governments to control the trade in drugs through regulation, and argue that decriminalisation does little or nothing to address the wider harms caused by the trade in drugs. Further, opponents of legalisation argue that there is a strong risk that changing the legal status of drugs would lead to a vast increase in use, and the attendant damage caused by use.

Those in favour of decriminalisation argue that the enforcement of drug control policies itself creates a situation where individuals and families affected by drug addiction are marginalised and obstructed in finding help. They argue that many of the harms identified as arising from the use and trade in drugs are the result of criminalisation and enforcement. Some cities and countries have introduced decriminalisation policies for personal use of some or all drugs, alongside an increased focus on treatment for drug users.
Going a step further, some argue that legalising both the use and trade of drugs would reduce the harm caused to states by illegal production and supply. Prohibition strategies would be replaced by a regulatory system to control supply and access to drugs currently classified as illegal. Supporters of legalisation suggest that much of the violence and corruption caused by the trade in drugs is a result of enforcement policies. Some reject the claim that this strategy would lead to a significant increase in use, arguing that the numbers of people reporting use of illegal drugs show little correspondence to the level of effort in combating drug supply and use.

Recent policy in the UK has been to maintain the criminal status of drug use and supply, but to focus on harm reduction. This has included using enforcement to restrict supply, alongside drug education programmes for young people, and embedding a drug treatment programme for offenders within the criminal justice system.

**BOOKS AND REPORTS**


Available online at: [http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/drugs/acmd1/hidden-harm](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/drugs/acmd1/hidden-harm)

Report of an inquiry into the number of children affected by parents using drugs, and the impact that this had on their development. The report estimated that there were as many children affected by drug using parents as there were drug users in the country. Other conclusions were that drug use by parents harmed child development at all stages, and that effective treatment of parents was also beneficial for their children.


This report provides a review of implementation of the recommendations of the 2003 report, highlighting lessons learned over the three years. The report was written for government ministers and practitioners in support groups working with children of drug-using parents.


The main focus of this book is on US federal policy and the influence of US on international responses, through the United Nations. Buxton describes the development of prohibition as the predominant international response to the global drugs trade during the 20th Century. She argues that prohibition has largely failed to control the unregulated distribution of drugs, while also obstructing other harm-reducing strategies.


Discussion paper from the Centre for Social Justice, which identifies drug and alcohol addiction as a significant factor in criminal activity and in keeping people in poverty. The
paper calls for a review of the criminal justice system, and far-reaching changes to drug rehabilitation policy for offenders and in prisons.


This report criticises the Labour government’s harm reduction policies on drugs. Gyngell argues that treatment programmes have been expensive and ineffective, and enforcement under-funded. She proposes a new policy for illegal drugs in the UK that would prioritise reduction of supply and target all illegal drug use, with treatment programmes aimed at achieving abstinence rather than management of drug addiction.


The report identified problems with drugs policy, and made a series of recommendations to encourage a future policy based more on harm reduction and treatment than on punishment of users. The report did not support either legalisation or decriminalisation, but argued for greater focus on addressing the relatively small group of ‘problematic drug users’, and better education for the public and health professionals.


Husak presents arguments for and de Marneffe against legalisation. Chapters include, on one side, standards for assessing different regulation policies, and, on the other, a rights-based argument for prohibition.


In this book, Husak sets out arguments in favour of decriminalisation of drug use. He explains what he means by decriminalisation, the limitations of such an approach, and the main arguments against and in favour of his proposal.


This reviews the findings and evidence of 15 research reports which focussed on the link between drug law enforcement and violence (excluding military activity). The researchers conclude that the evidence shows that drug law enforcement contributes to increased gun crime and homicide rates. They suggest that increasing enforcement would not reduce violence, and that alternative means of drug control should be considered.

A review of drug control policy in the US. It concludes that enforcement of prohibition has largely failed. Essays in this book argue for different approaches in treating adult drug users, and examine the social and political effects of the drug war in the US.


Available online at: [http://books.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=10021](http://books.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=10021) (free content is further down the page)

The final report of the US National Research Council’s Committee on Data and Research for Policy on Illegal Drugs. The committee identified several areas where it felt that data was lacking or inadequate, with the effect that it was difficult to assess the success of enforcement policies. Areas of concern were over: the effect of supply reduction on drug prices; geographical mobility of supply; and how quickly the illegal trade adapts to attempts at restriction.


The essays in this book consider the philosophical and economic arguments used for and against prohibition policies. In general, attempts at prohibition are criticised as badly conceived and ineffective in practice. The chapter on recreational drugs reaches similar conclusions but stops short of advocating decriminalisation or legalisation.


Volume 1 of the Library of Drug Abuse and Crime. This series brings together previously published articles on drug use, prevention and treatment. Articles in this volume cover studies of drug use and attitudes to drug use, research methods, and drug abuse in the developing world.


Articles cover crimes related to trafficking and sale of illegal drugs, other crimes linked to drug use and violence and victimisation.


This volume includes several articles which examine different policy responses to illegal drug use, including decriminalisation.


A review of the past 30 years of drug policy in Ireland. O’Mahony argues that a prohibitionist approach had failed to achieve results in Ireland, and that its harm reduction strategies have also been unsuccessful. The book suggests that the case of Ireland demonstrates the inadequacy of an international prohibitionist stance towards drug control.

This book addresses a number of questions relating to cannabis use and legality. Cannabis accounts for the most instances of illegal drug use, yet it is accorded a low priority in determining global drug policy. The researchers consider a range of possible alternatives to current practices, including decriminalisation of use and elements of supply (as practised in some cities), and full legalisation.


This book is the result of a working party of the Royal College of Psychiatrists and Royal College of Physicians, charged to, ‘provide an authoritative review of the medical and social effects of drug use in the UK, and the historical and cultural setting in which this has developed, as a means of stimulating a widespread and well-informed debate, and thereby influencing public policy’. The book is written for a general public, and aims to explain why recreational drug use has grown so much in the UK over the past 50 years, and to evaluate the effectiveness and limitations of the control policies devised to combat drug use.


Strategy Unit. 2003. **Strategy Unit Drugs Report: Phase one – understanding the issues.** Available online at: [http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/cabinetoffice/strategy/assets/drugs_report.pdf](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/cabinetoffice/strategy/assets/drugs_report.pdf)

Presentation given by the Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit in 2003. The report focuses on the harm caused by heroin and crack cocaine addiction, both to the user and to wider society. The report raises concerns about a range of harm-reduction policies employed. It suggests that current treatment or criminal justice interventions are frequently not sustained long enough (from the point of view of the individual user) to change behaviour. Drug enforcement interventions to disrupt supply have been shown to result in changes to purity and price, which can benefit dealers, rather than restricting availability to users. Strategy Unit presentations do not necessarily reflect government policy.

Transform. 2009. **After the War on Drugs: Blueprint for regulation.** Bristol: Transform Drug Policy Foundation Available online at: [http://www.tdpf.org.uk/blueprint%20download.htm](http://www.tdpf.org.uk/blueprint%20download.htm)

Objections to legalisation of drugs are frequently based on concerns about the impact of drugs being made freely available in an open market. This report suggests regulation as an alternative policy. The benefits of regulation are described as removing some of the unintended harm contained within prohibition of drug use, while maintaining controls on access to harmful substances. Levels of regulation are described, from prescription only, through availability from pharmacies or licensed premises, to unlicensed sales for drugs which carry the least harm (for example foods containing caffeine). The report describes how regulation could be introduced, from production to supply and use, and offers a model for a phased international legalisation and regulation of drugs.

A practical guide and outline of main arguments and evidence in favour of drug policy reform. It is written for people in government and civil society organisations, and draws on the experience of Transform in arguing publicly for reform.


This report provides a critique of prohibitionist policies on drug control, and sets out a detailed case for the legal regulation of the drug trade. The report suggests the means by which a move to legal regulation could be effected and provides arguments in favour of regulation.

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**STATISTICS**

**Drugs in Wales 2008-2009, Welsh Assembly Government**

**Drug Related Deaths and Deaths due to Drug Misuse Registered in Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency**

**Drug Use, Smoking and Drinking among young people in England 2007**

Results of an annual survey of 11-15 year olds in secondary schools in England. There was an emphasis on asking about drug misuse in the 2007 report.

**Estimating the National and Local Prevalence of Problem Drug Misuse in Scotland**

available online at: [http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs09/hosb1609.pdf](http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs09/hosb1609.pdf)

available online at: [http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs09/hosb1209.pdf](http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs09/hosb1209.pdf)
The British Crime Survey is the largest source of data on self-reported drug use within the UK.

**Statistics and Research, Misuse of Drugs & Alcohol, Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety Northern Ireland**

Links to data, published statistics and related reports on levels of use and impacts of alcohol and drug use.
Annual statistical and analytical report that monitors changing trends of drug use and the global impact of drugs trade, including details of supply and demand. The 2010 issue includes a report of the effect of cocaine supply on the stability of transit countries.

JOURNALS

Drug and Alcohol Findings
Available in the British Library at: 3627.891000
Reviews of research relevant to UK policy. See also the Resources section for updates to this title.

Druglink
1986-present
Current 12 months available in British Library Social Sciences Reading Room
Earlier issues available in the British Library at: 3629.520000
The journal of DrugScope (the Institute for the Study of Drug Dependence), produced for people in the UK working in drug treatment and policy.

International Journal of the addictions
1966-1995
Available in the British Library at: 4541.550000
This journal is continued by Substance Use and Misuse.

International Journal on Drug Policy
1989-present
Available in the British Library at: 4542.188500

Substance Use and Misuse
1996-present
Current 12 months available in British Library Social Sciences Reading Room
Earlier issues available in the British Library at: ZC.9.a.7392 & 8503.493000
This title continues International Journal of the addictions

Special issues of journals include:

Available in the British Library at: Ac.2383
This special issue looks at various aspects of drug policy in countries across the world, including several European countries. One article examines the case of Portugal, one of the few countries that have decriminalised personal use and possession of all drugs.

Available in the British Library at: 3579.099700
Six articles looking at different policies adopted in European countries and cities. The analysis tends to focus on rationale and strategies behind policies rather than measuring effectiveness.
NEWS AND CURRENT DEBATE


Rory Carroll, ‘Britain’s love of cheap cocaine: the view from Latin America. While we regard the drug as socially acceptable, cocaine wreaks havoc in the countries that produce it’, The Observer, 7 March 2010. Available online at: http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/mar/07/cocaine-latin-america-narcotics-mexico

Antonio Maria Costa, ‘How many lives would have been lost if we didn’t have controls on drugs? Decriminalisation would be a disaster for poor countries. We need a balanced approach covering health, development and security’, The Observer, 20 September 2009. Available online at: http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/sep/20/drugs-decriminalisation


Charlene Sweeney, ‘A tonne of drugs kept off Scottish streets after record year for enforcement agency’, The Times, 11 August 2009

Matthew Engel, ‘Just say yes: Despite the latest efforts at crop eradication and law enforcement, the use of illegal drugs is as widespread as ever. Time, asks Matthew Engel, for a rethink?’, The Financial Times Magazine, 1 August 2009 Available online at: http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/486fb0d8-7ca3-11de-a7bf-00144feabdc0.html


RESOURCES ON THE WEB

Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs
http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/drugs/acmd/
This is an independent expert body that provides advice to the government on drug policy, and carries out research into issues of public concern relating to drug use. The website provides further information about the Council, and links to their reports.

Centre for Drug Misuse Research, University of Glasgow
http://www.gla.ac.uk/departments/drugmisuse/
Research unit dedicated to providing information to support people working in the field of drug misuse in Scotland. Research covers prevalence of drug misuse, effectiveness of policies to control drug use and treat addicts, and the link between drugs and crime.

Drug and Alcohol Findings
http://findings.org.uk/index.php
This project reviews UK-relevant research on alcohol and drug problems, and explaining the relevance of findings to practitioner groups.

Drug Misuse information Scotland
http://www.drugmisuse.isdscotland.org/index.htm
Includes links to statistics, policy papers and other research.

Drug Misuse: Key Points, Scottish Public Health Observatory
http://www.scotpho.org.uk/home/Behaviour/Drugs/drugs_keypoints.asp
Web pages provide an overview of key statistics, details on drugs policy, links to data sources and a bibliography on the impacts of drug use in Scotland.

Drug Treatment Outcomes Research Study (DTORS)
http://www.dtors.org.uk/DTORSHome.aspx
A major study of drug treatment centres, to find out what factors contributed to likelihood of a persons success in such a programme. The study has completed, and the website holds the final reports and details of methods, participating Drug Action Teams, and promotional materials.

Drugs Policy, The Guardian
http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/drugspolicy
Articles and comment on UK drugs policy, including treatment, civil liberties, reform and the law.

FRANK
http://www.talktofrank.com/
An independent website, funded by UK government to support the education of young people on the effects of drug use. The website includes contact details to talk confidentially with an adviser, information on specific drugs, and information for people concerned about drug use by friends or family.

Management of Substance Abuse, World Health Organization
http://www.who.int/substance_abuse/en/
The World Health Organization has a mandate to reduce the demand for non-medical use of psychoactive substances, regardless of their legal status. Programmes and research aim to reduce the harm caused by substance abuse, and to advise the UN on regulatory control. The website has reports, literature reviews and data on use, health and social implications, and prevention strategies.
National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse, NHS
http://www.nta.nhs.uk/
Estimates of prevalence of opiate and/or crack cocaine use by region can be found at http://www.nta.nhs.uk/facts-prevalence.aspx

Office of National Drug Control Policy
http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/index.html
The ONDCP is responsible for producing the US national drug control policy, and for evaluating US government activities in drug control. The publications section of the website includes many reports on policy, enforcement, levels of use and production, and other relevant topics.

RAND Drug Policy Research Centre
http://www.rand.org/multi/dprc/
The Research Centre produces reports on all aspects of policy relating to drug use and supply. Although the focus is on US policy, there are also reports on European activity. Recent reports include a study of the impact of proposals in California to regulate marijuana production and use.

Rat Park: Addiction is a situation, not a disease
http://sciencethatmatters.com/archives/6
Link to, and short commentary on, an article originally published in 1980 in the journal *Pharmacology, Biochemistry and Behaviour*. The research questions assumptions made in experimental studies of addiction, and demonstrates a methodology for testing the impact of environment on addiction. The results of this experiment indicated that environmental factors (e.g. the availability of other distractions) were important in determining use of substances presumed to be addictive.

Release: Drugs, the Law and Human Rights
http://www.release.org.uk/
Release provides specialist advice on drugs and drug law, for individuals and organisations. It campaigns for change in UK drug policy, in particular focussing on issues related to civil liberties.

Tackling Drugs Changing Lives
http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100419081707/http://drugs.homeoffice.gov.uk/
Archived website outlining the policy of the previous UK government in addressing misuse of drugs. Priorities focussed on enforcing laws to reduce supply, a Drug Intervention Programme that worked alongside the criminal justice process, and an emphasis on education for young people.

Transform Drug Policy Foundation
http://www.tdpf.org.uk
Transform is a think tank in support of legalisation and regulation of the drugs trade. They argue that prohibition policies increase the harm caused by drug use. The website contains more information in support of their arguments and links to their reports. The *Resources* section of the website contains a bibliography, lists of key reports and a detailed description of available statistics.
HOW THE LIBRARY CAN HELP YOU TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THIS TOPIC

The British Library holds reports, books and journals from all over the world, covering many issues of importance to the way we live our lives. Much of this is recorded in our Library Catalogue at http://catalogue.bl.uk. We also provide current awareness services and subscribe to databases that you can use to keep up to date with current research. Some of these services that are relevant to drug control and treatment policy are listed below:

**Inter-Governmental Organisations**
Inter-Governmental Organisations have been key to co-ordinated action in enforcing anti-drug policies and in researching the scale of drug production and use. The legal context is in many ways influenced by international treaties, agreeing the status of substances. The Library is a depository for several IGOs and their agencies, such as the European Union, United Nations and World Health Organisation. We hold all print materials produced by these organisations, and provide access to databases and other tools to support research.
Find out more about our collections at:
http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelprestype/offpubs/index.html

**Criminal Justice Abstracts**
Index of books, journal articles and other reports from the UK, US and Europe. Subjects include criminology, crime prevention, police, courts and punishment.

**HMIC (Health Management Information Consortium)**
HMIC brings together databases from the Department of Health, Health Management Information Service, and Kings Fund. Use this to find books and journal articles relating to treatment of substance abuse, health effects of illegal drugs and drug enforcement policies.

**Welfare Reform on the Web**
available online at: http://www.bl.uk/welfarereform/
This is a monthly publication that describes news stories, government reports and other publications relevant to welfare policy and provision in the UK and elsewhere in the world.

**How to get a reader’s pass**
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http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/inrooms/stp/register/stpregister.html

More bibliographies on subjects relating to social sciences can be found at:
http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelpsubject/socsci/topbib/bibliographies.html