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Illicit drug policies and social outcomes: a cross-country analysis

ERANID meeting, 2 March 2017, Brussels

Overview

- Aim
  - To measure the impact that different drug-related legal frameworks have on society (with a special focus on cannabis)
- Project steps
  - State-of-the-art comparative law technique (leximetrics) to compare national drug policies
  - Quantitative and qualitative study of stakeholders' perceptions of drug law (law in action)
  - Identification and analysis of key drug-related social indicators
  - Quantitative techniques to understand relationship between national drug policies and social indicators

Overview

- Scope of analysis
  - 7 countries: Portugal, France, Italy, Netherlands, England, Canada and Australia
  - Ideally over a 20-year period: 1996-2016
- Results
  - Shed further light on the impact that specific drug law characteristics may have on drug-related indicators
  - (hopefully) of value to inform policy making

The team

ADVISORS

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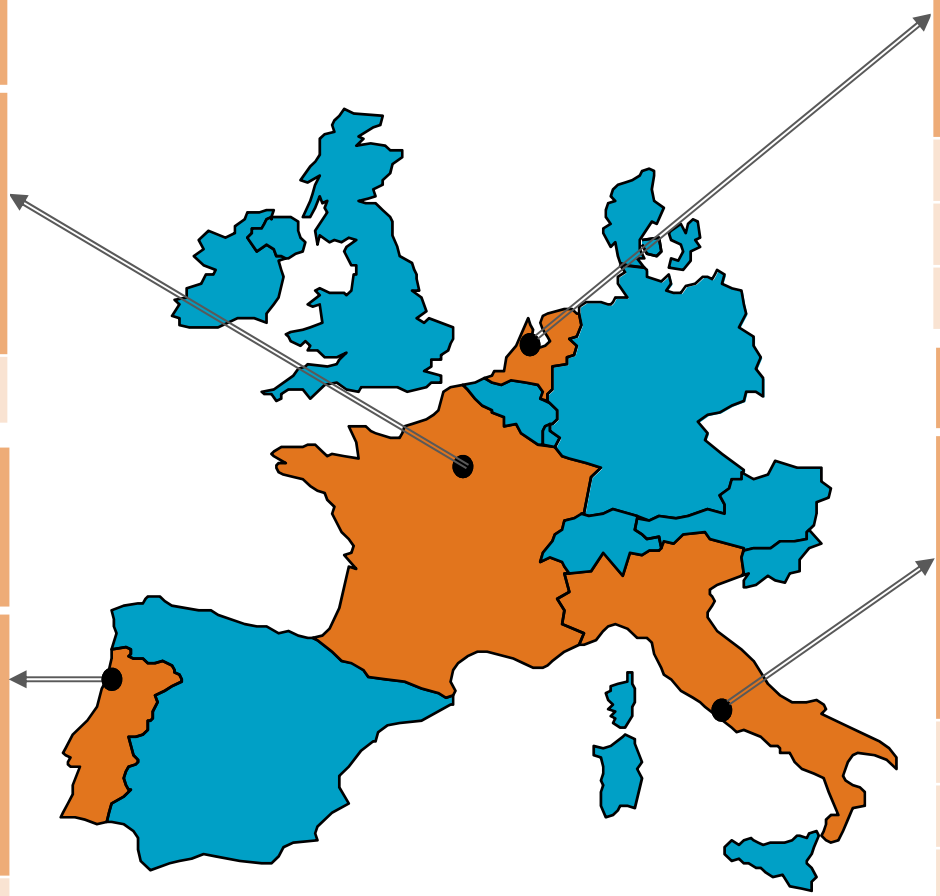

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Background

- Worldwide diversity in national drug laws and policies
  - Variety of paradigms, e.g., crime-centred or health-centred
  - Reflection of each country's social, economic and cultural drivers
- Illicit drugs generate social costs
  - And yet little is known about the relationship between key drug-related indicators and the applicable drug policy framework
  - (naturally) difficult task
    - Written policy vs. policy in action vs. perceived policy
    - Each country's drug policy is unique, contextual and evolved over time

Background

- Understanding the relationship between drug policy and key social indicators is, therefore, important
  - Drug policy impacts on drug production, distribution and use
  - Results would surely inform ongoing scientific debate (especially, but not only, for cannabis)
  - But results would also help in (future) policy making

Graphical representation of rationale

National drug policies (law in books)

- Which drugs are illicit?
- What is illicit for each drug?
  - Production? Distribution? Use?
- Is production/distribution/use totally illicit or only above certain thresholds?
- Is production/distribution/use a criminal offence or a misdemeanour?
  - May drug producers/distributers/users be jailed or be subject to administrative penalties?
- Drug strategy rationale
  - Health-oriented? Balance between treatment, prevention, and risk and harm reduction
- Characteristics of the drug treatment network
  - Public? Geographically spread? Easily accessible? What does it cover?

Demographic, cultural and economic characteristics

[United Nations, 2012, World Drug Report]

- Sociodemographic factors: age; gender; level of urbanization
- Sociocultural factors: societal value system (level of social control; predominant religion or the role of peer-pressure; conditions among vulnerable groups)
- Socioeconomic factors: level of disposable income; level of social inequality; unemployment

National drug policies' perceptions

- How do different stakeholders perceive drug policy?
  - Stakeholders:
    - Producers, distributers, users
    - Institutions: drug and health agencies, judicial system
  - Perceptions:
    - What is illicit? What is *effectively* punished?
    - What can a drug addict do to be treated? What does he/she *actually* do?

Drug-related social indicators

- Health indicators
  - Drug production/distribution/use indicators
  - Drug addicts undergoing treatment
  - Associated health conditions' indicators (HIV, hepatitis, etc.)
- Legal system indicators
  - Drug law offences
  - Drug-related imprisonments

Workplan

- WP1 – Coordination of the project
  - Project start-up
  - Progress meetings
  - Progress reports and final report
  - Monitoring project progress (via Skype or e-mail)

Workplan

- WP2 - Cross-country comparison of national drug policies using leximetrics
  - Leader: Ana Lourenço, Católica Porto Business School (Portugal)
  - Participants: MIPA (Italy)
  - Timing: Most of year 1, extending to year 2
  - Tasks
    - Draft guidelines for legal data collection
    - Contact official entities in the selected countries
    - Collection of legal data
    - Translation of legal documents (when needed)
    - Develop tools for preliminary legal data analysis
    - Progress report outlining main findings

Workplan

- WP3 - Qualitative and quantitative study of drug policy perceptions
  - Leader: Dirk Korf, University of Amsterdam (Netherlands)
  - Participants: Católica Porto BS (Portugal), Paris School of Economics (France), MIPA (Italy)
  - Timing: Second half of year 1; most of year 2
  - Tasks
    - Create a survey questionnaire
    - Define the sample and survey methodology in each country
    - Conduct the survey and analyse the results
    - Identify key experts in each country and conduct semi-structured interviews
    - Produce a detailed progress report with the main results

Workplan

- WP4 - Developing key social indicators for drug policy analysis
  - Leader: Pierre Kopp, Paris School of Economics (France)
  - Participants: MIPA (Italy)
  - Timing: Second half of year 1; most of year 2
  - Tasks
    - Review the literature on social indicators
    - Identify the social indicators relevant to this study
    - Maintain a regular contact with key experts or institutions in the selected countries
    - Collect, for the selected countries, data on the relevant social indicators
    - Identify problems in the data collection process or in the data
    - Produce a comprehensive database of social indicators
    - Produce a detailed progress report

Workplan

- WP5 - Assessing the impact of drug policies on key social indicators
  - Leader: Ricardo Gonçalves, Católica Porto Business School (Portugal)
  - Participants: Paris School of Economics (France), MIPA (Italy), University of Amsterdam (Netherlands)
  - Timing: Second half of year 2; most of year 3
  - Tasks
    - Carefully review the reports of WP2, WP3 and WP4
    - Analyse the database produced in WP2
    - Analyse the survey and interview results of WP3
    - Analyse the social indicators database collected in WP4
    - Identify the most suited qualitative and quantitative techniques to analyse the data
    - Quantitative analysis of drug policy impact
    - Produce a final report

Workplan

- WP6 - Knowledge building and societal dissemination
  - Leader: Católica Porto Business School (Portugal)
  - Participants: Paris School of Economics (France), MIPA (Italy), University of Amsterdam (Netherlands)
  - Timing: Second half of year 3
  - Tasks
    - Build and implement a dissemination plan
    - Organise workshops, conferences or other dissemination events
    - Contact stakeholders in the countries analysed to disseminate the results
    - Plan the scientific dissemination of the research results
    - Be available to present the research results in a variety of forums

Budget

Institution	Requested funding
Católica Porto Business School (Portugal)	€49,730
Paris School of Economics (France)	€149,430
MIPA (Italy)	€100,000
University of Amsterdam (Netherlands)	€164,390
TOTAL AMOUNT REQUESTED	€463,550

Outcomes

- By developing a method for quantitatively analysing drug policies, the project:
  - contributes to a cross-country perspective on drug policies
  - widens the field of alternative policies to consider in dealing with the drug problem in each country
  - facilitates an ex ante assessment of the impact of different policy alternatives on key social indicators
- Key actors participate in research process
  - Engagement is essential, especially for perceptions' dimension of our project

Outcomes

- Knowledge transfer into organizations in the countries involved
- Scientific articles in peer-reviewed journals, as well as lay publications
- Knowledge dissemination via workshops, conferences and other events

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Thank you.