

Niamh Eastwood, Executive Director, Release, London, UK

*Czech drug policy is grounded in an evidence based approach which has successfully reduced the harms of controlled drugs and is a shining example of what can be achieved when drug possession is decriminalised and harm reduction approaches scaled up. With one of the lowest rates of drug related deaths and blood borne viruses in Europe, it would be a disaster for people who use drugs and their families if the current policy was rolled back.*

Caitlin Hughes, Senior Research Fellow, National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW, Sydney, Australia

*The Czech drug policy combining decriminalisation of personal drug possession and harm reduction is internationally recognised as a model of best practice and for its' health, social and criminal justice benefits. Efforts to maintain this policy are urged.*

Marta Costa, Student, Bc, University of Roehampton, London, UK

*The Czech Republic has been a fairly early example of a drug policy that takes into account reality, research and humanity, instead of prioritising negative and punitive mindsets. It would be truly devastating and embarrassing to negate and reverse that progress.*

Darejan Jana Javakhishvili, Prof., Director Institute of Addictology, Ilia State University, Tbilisi, Georgia

*The Czech Republic is one of the best examples of effective Drug Policy reforms and serves as a role model for other former socialist and former Soviet countries in this regard. One of the key reasons/factors due to which the Czech Republic succeeded in reforming drug policy is the current institutional set up. Namely, the fact that inter-departmental Secretariat of the Government Council for Drug Policy Coordination (SGCDPC) and its National Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addictions (NMCDDA) is a part of the Office of the Government. Changing this institutional set up means undermining Czech drug policy and returning to the pre-reform state of affairs.*

*Therefore, we would like to urge the relevant decision-makers to reconsider their decision and preserve a very effective institutional set up as it is now. This will prevent deterioration of drug situation in the country. Please, do not reverse the reform back! Please, preserve the Czech Republic as an example of the best practices, pragmatic policies and effective institutional solutions in the drug field!*

Shaun Shelly, Researcher University of Pretoria, TBHIV Care, SA Drug Policy City of Tshwane and Cape Town South Africa

*Dear Sir,*

*The Czech Republic has been an excellent point of reference for countries and cities around the world who are looking for better ways to respond to the use of drugs.*

*I urge you to reconsider these proposed changes to your policies. I have used Prague as an example of a city that has effective policy when working with the City of Tshwane and would really not like to retract my recommendations of engaging with Prague in a proposed 5-cities meeting on establishing effective municipal drug policy.*

*Sincerely,*

*Shaun Shelly*

Irma Kirtadze, Assistant Professor, Dr. Ilia State University, Tbilisi, Georgia

*For us, Georgians, Czech drug policy is considered as a successful model of decriminalisation. We learn from our Czech colleagues how to implement such a balanced approach to drugs. This definitely should be preserved, not abandoned.*

Martin Iguchi, Professor, University of California, Los Angeles, USA

*I encourage the Czech Republic government not to move the SGCDPC and its NMCDDA from the Office of the Government to the Ministry of Health. The current arrangement is both successful and efficient.*

Damian Granier, Psychotherapist, Consultant, Warrington, UK

*I have worked in the drug and alcohol misuse field for over 20 years. I am a consultant for some of the biggest providers in the sector and have worked at Director level in a national provider of recovery services. I have had some involvement in the Czech Republic and firmly believe this is a regressive move that will cause more harm than good. To date I had been impressed with the willingness of the Czech government to embrace evidence based practice versus a short term populist policy.*

Rachel Horsley, Dr. Lecturer and Researcher, Nottingham Trent University/National Institute of Mental Health

*The current drug treatment policy and its organisation in the Czech Republic is the only functional one that I have encountered across numerous countries in the world. The Czech system treats those with substance use and related disorders with dignity, respect and an emphasis on personal responsibility. Replacement and maintenance drug therapies with less onus on abstinence work because they allow those with drug 'addictions' a much greater opportunity to function as useful members of society, to maintain employment, personal/social relationships and avoid*

*criminality until they are in the best position to recover fully, instead of being trapped in a never-ending revolving door of enforced abstinence and subsequent relapse and the moral judgements that accompany this. Any interference in this system risks harms (including death) to individuals and wider society. The system in place in Czech Republic is one that the Czech government and Czech people should be proud of and should be protected.*