

Update: Cannabis policy in Germany

(January 2025 - November 2026)

Government Elections, February 2025

Since the coalition of SPD, the Greens, and FDP fell in autumn 2024, new elections were held in February 2025. The new government, consisting of CDU/CSU and SPD, came to an agreement in April 2025 and Mr Merz was elected as the new Prime Minister on the sixth of May. The new Minister of Health is Nina Warken (CDU) (Die Bundesregierung, n.d.).

During the election campaign, the CDU/CSU has been very vocal about their disapproval of the legalisation law and indicated that they would repeal the law and recriminalise cannabis. The German cannabis association, on the other hand, promoted the slogan “choose legalisation” by highlighting those parties that were in favour of legalisation (Wurth, 2025).

The CDU/CSU announced their victory but only seemed to be able to work together with SPD to enjoy a majority in the parliament. During the coalition discussions, it was soon made clear that the question of repealing the legalisation was taken off the table. It seems that the repeal was a stronger wish by the CSU (the Bavarian department) than the CDU and was therefore negotiable (Schulze, 2025a). Additionally, it seems that a quick repeal would hardly be possible by law as the liability risks were too great and the legal situation too uncertain (Heimerzheim, 2025). As a result, the coalition agreement does not mention the repeal of the legalisation law but rather continues with the scheduled plan to conduct a first official review in the autumn of 2025 (NTV, 2025). Nevertheless, CDU leaders have continued to express their intention to pursue future amendments to the law, particularly highlighting concerns regarding risks for individuals under 25, the relatively high personal possession limit of 25 grams, and the need to restrict medical cannabis to forms such as drops or capsules rather than smoked products (Stern, 2025).

Cannabis Clubs

As of mid-2025, 293 Cannabis Social Clubs have been officially approved across Germany, according to data compiled from state authorities. These clubs are authorised to cultivate and distribute cannabis to their members. Overall, Nordrhein-Westfalen leads with 83 approved clubs, followed by Niedersachsen (55), Rheinland-Pfalz (27), and Baden-Württemberg (23). Hamburg has the highest number of clubs relative to population (13), while Bavaria ranks lowest (8). The latter initially attempted to avoid approving the requested cannabis licences but ultimately did so following lawful submissions (Schulze, 2025a). Saarland has not approved any club so far. Other States include Berlin (7), Sachsen (16), Sachsen-Anhalt (at least 6), Thüringen (6), Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (3), and Bremen (2). There are still 328 applications under review while 27 applications have officially been rejected, and 53 applications were withdrawn by the applicants themselves (Schulze, 2025) (DIE ZEIT, 2025).

Observatory Plan

As ordered by law, the first interim report, evaluating the cannabis consumption act and its impact on the “protection of children and young people, health protection, and cannabis related crime”, was published in September 2025, analysing data available up to August 2025. Early data shows that cannabis-related crime has decreased since its legalisation, but primarily due to the legal reclassification, not behavioural change (i.e. making previously illegal acts legal). Other key observations include:

- Overall use has not significantly increased, likely due to the short timeframe.
- Youth use has not risen, possibly following pre-existing long-term trends.
- The black market remains largely unaffected, as the non-commercial model cannot fully replace it.
- Increases in use are mostly part of ongoing trends, with higher prevalence among male users.

Additionally, prevention efforts appear to have declined, though the report links this to the slight decrease in youth consumption. Authorities report an increased administrative workload due to complex new regulations and the difficulty of differentiating between medical and non-medical markets. Overall, the general notion is that it is too early to conclude on many aspects and that change is not yet recommended. It does include the recommendation to increase the number of cannabis clubs (Manthey , et al., 2025). However, to fully replace the cannabis black market, it would require an estimated 5,000 to 10,000 cannabis clubs and approximately 5 million members willing to become members, an outcome considered highly unrealistic (Schulze, 2025).

Earlier in 2025, news reports already highlighted that the illegal market had not reduced but rather increased. In 2024, the police had captured 6 tonnes of illegal marijuana, compared to 1.6 tonnes in 2023. Nevertheless, according to the Health Senator, “it is too early to draw conclusions” (Müller, 2025). The illegal market adapted following legalisation and remains the primary point of entry for minors, while prevention initiatives continue to be neglected.. Those facing an addiction also reported that they buy from the illegal market since it is cheaper, faster to get, and stronger in its potency. The few existing/functioning Cannabis Clubs complain about missing permits and excessive regulations, confirming the bureaucratic monster that was created (Heimerzheim, 2025).

Pilot Programme

In 2024, the cities Hannover and Frankfurt am Main announced that they would start the implementation of the Pillar 2 pilot in 2025, to test the controlled sale of cannabis, in collaboration with Sanity Group GmbH (Hannover, 2024). The study was to be led by Prof. Müller-Vahl, Dr. Stöver, and Sanity Group (Stadt Frankfurt am Main, n.d.). The involvement of Prof. Müller-Vahl did raise concerns due to her role on the Sanity Group’s medical advisory board.

When the new elections were announced late 2024, it was already suspected that the pilot programme might be halted, considering that the CDU was leading the polls and had always been vocal about their opposition. In September 2025, Hannover announced that the Federal Office for Agriculture and Food had rejected the pilot application, citing that “the Consumer Cannabis Act (Pillar 1) does not provide sufficient legal basis for granting a permit” and, therefore, the pilot could not be implemented. Sanity Group has filed an objection to this decision (Hannover, 2025).

Medical Cannabis

Medical cannabis use has grown rapidly since the semi-legalisation of non-medical cannabis use and its removal from the Narcotics Act, now falling under the standalone Medicinal Cannabis Act. The new framework opened the door for telemedicine providers, creating a grey zone in which online companies began issuing prescriptions without in-person or even virtual consultations, advertising “Become a cannabis patient in 3 minutes”. Users could self-diagnose via an online form, with mainly multiple-choice questions, and receive their order by mail soon after. This loophole has been widely used by non-medical users. One company even organised events where clients openly consumed their prescribed cannabis. Meanwhile, patients in genuine need of medical cannabis report that specific strains required for treatment had become scarce due to high non-medical demand (Braun, von Galen, & Jansen, 2025).

Medical cannabis imports in 2024 reflect this sharp increase in consumption. Germany imported 20.6 tonnes in 2021 (BfArM, 2022) but, after legal changes in 2024, quarterly imports rose to 8.1 tonnes (Q1 – before legalisation), 11.6 tonnes (Q2), 20.7 tonnes (Q3), and 31.7 tonnes (Q4) (rbb24, 2025). However, despite rising supply, patients with chronic or severe illnesses reported worsening access to medically necessary cannabis due to shortages (Die Spur, 2025).

Furthermore, criticism arose from various stakeholders. Physicians emphasised that cannabis flowers, commonly sold via online platforms, are “rarely medically necessary, except perhaps in palliative care” (Haug, 2025). The medical cannabis industry and patient associations also expressed concern. In December 2024, an open letter signed by multiple organisations, including BDCAN, DCA, Verband der Cannabis versorgenden Apotheken, Fette Pharma, and Bedrocan, called for banning online prescriptions without in-person consultation, warning of “widespread abuse of medical cannabis for non-medical purposes” (Bedrocan, 2024).

In response, newly appointed Health Minister Nina Warke (CDU) proposed a legislative amendment in June 2025 to curb what she called an “inflationary increase in prescriptions” (Suliak, 2025), the draft, approved by the Federal Cabinet, proposes (Bundesministerium für Gesundheit, 2025b):

- Mandatory in-person consultations, including assessment on the patient’s physical health, medical history, and risk of addiction/psychological consequences.
- In-person quarterly follow-up consultation meetings with the same prescriber to extend prescriptions.

- A ban on mail-order delivery (except regulated pharmacy delivery services).

The new framework faces broad criticism. Physicians point out that cannabis flowers, mostly sold on online platforms, are “rarely medically necessary, perhaps in palliative care”. Despite the

The draft now awaits parliamentary approval, where CDU and SPD hold a majority. However, internal division within the SPD may delay the process, and no voting date has been announced (Heim, 2025b).

Opinion Polls

Various opinion polls show differing results. A survey commissioned by the KKH Commercial Health Insurance Fund (KKH-Pressstelle, 2025), held in February 2025, showcases the following observations:

- 55% of 1000 responses considers the partial legalisation of cannabis to be correct and is accordingly against its repeal. This number increases to 75% among 18–34-year-olds. 36% supports the abolition of the cannabis law, which is 19% among 18–34-year-olds.
- 73% agree with the statement that the use of drugs, such as cannabis, is harmful to health
- 49% believes that cannabis is a gateway drug that quickly leads to the use of other drugs
- 39% believes that partial legalisation has opened the door to excessive cannabis consumption
- 60% believe that legalisation helps curb the black market and thus the consumption of contaminated cannabis.
- 43% considers cannabis to be a harmless drug that helps with many health problems. Among 15–34-year-olds, 53% agrees with this statement.

A survey by European Union Drugs Agency, YouGov, ZDF heute, and Statista (Bocksch, 2025) from March 2025 showcase, however, that the opinions on the legalisation are divided. While 38% believes that the legalisation should be abolished, another 38% believes that it should exist in the current semi-legalisation framework. 11% believes that it should be expanded while 13% does not know.

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