

Decriminalization of Drug Use in Estonia

Non-coercive measures in practice

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Hello, I'm **Mart Kalvet!**

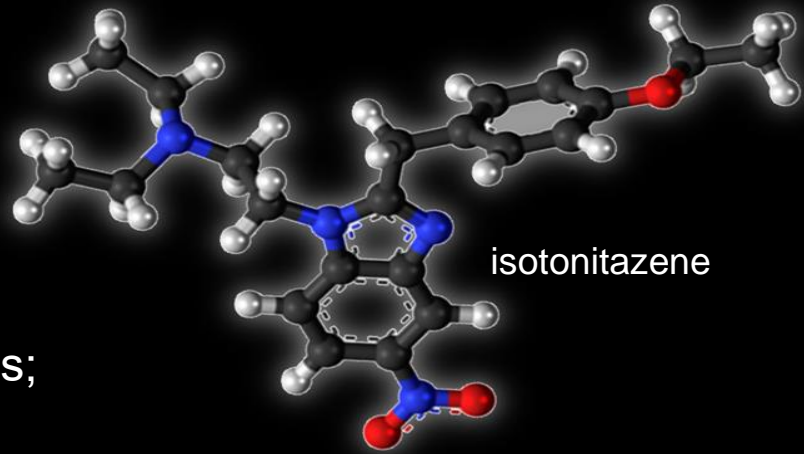
- board member at **LUNEST** (drug users' CSO)
- support person at the diversion-from-arrest program **SÜTIK**
- co-founder of **Reagentuur** (club drug harm reduction company)
- board member at **Estonian Medical Cannabis Association**

Drug laws in Estonia:

- use and possession of small amounts **decriminalized** since 2005;
- small amount defined as "enough to intoxicate at least 10 *average people*";
- **supply and production** remain **criminal** offenses;
- possession of small amounts punishable by **fine of up to €1200** or up to **30 days of arrest**;
- alternatives to punishment exist, but are not applied systematically;
- the law discriminates against people with opioid addiction
(a day's supply of a heavily dependent person may be considered a large amount).

Unwanted Consequences of Estonian Drug Laws

- Big busts followed by influx of novel substances;
- cryptoweb sales increase;
- drug screens become unreliable;
- traditional substances mixed with / sold as NPS-s;
- "homebrewing" of contaminated substances.



Cooperation between various stakeholders

- LUNEST provides monthly drug scene reports to NHDI;
- the police occasionally issue warnings to users;
- non-coercive interventions like SÜTIK and VALIK are seen by government bodies as viable alternatives to coercive sanctions.



Some numbers — VALIK, SÜTIK, drug misdemeanors

- Since 2018, VALIK has had 170 clients, 43 sent by police. 62 are active now.
- SÜTIK currently has 356 clients in two regions (Harju and Ida-Viru counties). ~10% have been sent by police or parole officer, or ordered by court.
- Number of drug misdemeanors has reduced (4289 in 2017; 3020 in 2018; 2496 in 2019), while number of drug crimes has remained stable (~1500 yearly).

Has decriminalization been a success in Estonia?

- **Yes** — alternatives to coercive sanctions are available and recognized by state bodies, and the number of registered drug misdemeanors has decreased since initiation of diversion-from-arrest programs (VALIK, SÜTIK).
- **No** — drug use and related harms are still prevalent, and the number of registered drug crimes hasn't decreased.
- **It's impossible to tell** — because no control group exists.

Conclusion:

- decriminalization is not a silver bullet,
- but even when done sloppily, it's still better than no decriminalization.

Thanks, everyone!



LUNEST ESTONIAN ASSOCIATION
OF PEOPLE WHO USE
PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES

