
Malta: bill on “responsible cannabis use”. 16 Catholic associations voice their opposition and concern

The number of those concerned about the bill presented by the Maltese Government on 6 October on the so-called “responsible use of cannabis” is growing. The proposed law would allow the possession by an adult of up to 7 grams of cannabis for personal use and consumption. Trafficking remains a serious crime, but the proposed law would allow the establishment of non-profit private associations whose members could collectively grow and possess up to 50 grams of marijuana each per month. A “Responsible Cannabis Use Authority” would be established to regulate and control the sector. According to the government, the bill does not aim to encourage consumption, but to crack down on illegal sale and trafficking. However, 16 Catholic-inspired associations working in the social field believe that “the bill would cause more harm than benefit to the Maltese society”. They are concerned about vulnerable children and young people and the message that “would be conveyed to them about the use and culture of cannabis”. In the past few days, the Secretariat for Catholic Education and the Association of Catholic Schools, too, had voiced criticism of the government for “pushing through a bill on cannabis use at the end of the parliamentary term”. The government was also criticized for providing “very little information on the feedback received after the publication of the White Paper in March”. Indeed, according to the two associations, most of the feedbacks were “very critical of the proposed law and the negative impact it would have on children and young people”. Such a bill “deserves a serious, mature and thorough national debate”, they said, pointing to the need to “learn from the experiences of other countries where protective measures to reduce drug abuse, particularly among young people, have been successful”.

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