
Malta: cannabis approved “for recreational use”. Objections from Catholic Church, NGOs and Schools Association

Malta has officially legalised cannabis for recreational use. It is the first European country to introduce such a legislation. The Parliament in Valletta approved the bill at third reading by 36 votes to 27 on Tuesday. The President of the Republic, George Vella, is now expected to sign it into law. Under the new legislation, it will be permissible to own up to 7 grams of the substance and grow up to 4 plants at home. Until the very end, the debate has been heated and the whole Catholic Church has expressed its opposition to the bill. According to Caritas Director Anthony Gatt, the problem is not just the liberalisation itself, but “the monitoring of the implementation of such rules” for failure to guarantee it can “potentially damage” the law. Noel Xerri from the OASI Foundation, for his part, pointed the finger at the contradictory nature of the law that liberalises cannabis while also “at the same time imposing campaigns on responsible cannabis use”. To reduce cannabis harm, according to Xerri, one must think of “recreational ways that do not harm society in the long term”. Even the Catholic Schools Association lamented the fact that the law does not sufficiently protect the most vulnerable, particularly children. A petition signed by a wide range of NGOs and associations of various kinds proposing a series of amendments to the law was submitted to Parliament for discussion before the final vote, but they were ignored.

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