



ÚŘAD VLÁDY ČESKÉ REPUBLIKY
MGR. JINDŘICH VOBOŘIL
Národní protidrogový koordinátor

PRESS RELEASE

The expert working group has prepared a legislative proposal to allow access to medical cannabis in the Czech Republic

Prague, December 8, 2011

The National anti-drug coordinator (of the Czech Government), Jindřich Vobořil, and the Dean of the First Faculty of Medicine of Charles University in Prague, Tomáš Zima (head of the expert group) today closed the expert working group that was formed under the auspices of the Czech Prime Minister, Mr Petr Nečas, and supported by the President of the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Parliament, Ms Miroslava Němcová. The task of the *"Expert Group for Legal Access to Cannabis for Medical Treatment and Research in the Czech Republic"* was to determine under what conditions cannabis could be used for medical therapy and research in the Czech Republic, and, subsequently, to identify the changes that are needed for it in the Czech legislation.

"First of all, the working group gathered the positions of the professional medical associations that work under the umbrella of the Czech Medical Society of Jan Evangelista Purkyně. Professional medical associations have defined diseases and diagnoses for which it is possible and/or desirable to have cannabis as a treatment option. According to the position of the medical associations, these include chronic severe pains occurring as a symptom of a number of diseases, nausea and vomiting accompanying some very serious diseases and their treatment, tremors and muscle tension disorders, symptoms of certain skin diseases, and others," Professor Zima, the chair of the group, commented on the outputs.

The main task of the Expert Group was to prepare a proposal for specific legislative changes that will lead to access to cannabis for patients with these diagnoses and, at the same time, prevent the leakage of medical cannabis to the illicit market.

"The Expert Group prepared a proposal for amendments in a paragraphed version and now it is passing it to the Czech Prime Minister and the Chairman of the Chamber of Deputies. At the same time, the group prepared a standard Statement of Reasons, which explains why these changes are needed and what the logic of the proposal is. Now, the adoption of the legislative proposal will be the decision and responsibility of the members of the Parliament and senators," said the Czech National anti-drug coordinator, Mr. Jindřich Vobořil.

Legislative amendments are proposed in particular to the Act on Pharmaceuticals and the Act on Addictive Substances of the Czech Law. The group recommended, *inter alia*, the inclusion of medical cannabis into Annex I of the Act on Addictive Substances. This will allow Czech patients to receive medical cannabis without special permission under the standard prescription regime. *"At the same time, the Commission proposed entrusting the State Institute for Drug Control (SIDC) to exercise the powers of a state agency for the control of medical cannabis. According to the 1961 UN Drug Convention, the Czech Republic is bound to set up an agency that would control licensed growers of medical cannabis in the Czech Republic,"* says the Czech national anti-drug coordinator, Jindřich Vobořil.

The proposal excludes any possibility that patients could legally grow cannabis for their treatment. The expert working group led by Professor Zima recommends exclusive distribution of medical cannabis through a standard network of pharmacies and hospitals. According to the recommendations of the Expert Group, the costs of medical cannabis should be covered by health insurance, which is universal in the Czech Republic.

The Working Group also considers it essential that medical cannabis is prescribed using exclusively the "restricted electronic prescription". An electronic prescription helps ensure that no more than one doctor prescribes cannabis to a single patient and that a pharmacy does not distribute inappropriately excessive amounts of the medication. The advantage with regard to the prescription and distribution of medical cannabis is the fact that an e-prescription can be prescribed by a specialist doctor at a distance (after initial consultation), so that the network of prescribing doctors is rather restricted and, thus, controllable. This prevents the risk of overlaps between the legal market in medical cannabis and the illegal market in illicit drugs. E-prescriptions also make it easy to check whether the person has been diagnosed and is entitled to possess cannabis for medical purposes or not. With regard to personal and medical data protection, e-prescriptions will serve as effective protection against the patient having problems with the law.

The working group was composed of legislators and other professionals from state bodies and the parliament, of scientists, medical doctors and representatives of patients and professional associations. The institutions involved were the Czech Medical Society of Jan Evangelista Purkyně, the Ministry of Health and its Inspectorate of narcotic and psychotropic substances, the National Institute for Drug Control, the Ministry of Justice, the Secretariat of the Government Council for Drug Policy and its National Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, the Centre for Addictology of Charles University in Prague, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice, the Institute for Criminology and Social Prevention, the National Police Drug Squad, the Government's Legislative Council, the Legislative Office of the Chamber of Deputies, and the Parliamentary Institute. The group was established at the end of August 2011, and after its meeting on 8th December 2011 its activities were closed officially.

Mr Jindřich Vobořil, MA
Czech National Drug Coordinator
tel. +420-725 805 865

Prof. Tomáš Zima, M.D., Ph.D., MBA
Dean of First Medical Faculty, Charles
University in Prague

Contact person for media:
Ms Michaela Hochmanová
tel. +420-606 656 928

Contact person for media:
Ms Vlasta Helekalová
tel: +420-224 964 313
+420-776 257 487

This press release, the composition of the working group, and the previously released information on the activities of the "Joint Expert Group of the Secretariat of the Government Council for Anti-Drug Policy Coordination and the Chamber of Deputies, on legislation and related regulations governing the cultivation, processing, distribution and use of non-technical cannabis for therapeutic and research purposes" can be found on the website of the Government Council for Drug Policy Coordination www.vlada.cz.