20 PRINCIPLES
FOR THE RESPONSIBLE LEGAL REGULATION OF CANNABIS

Health and human rights of people who use drugs

1. PROTECT RIGHTS
Regulated markets enable consumer protection and health regulations to uphold the rights of people who use drugs, while labor laws protect cannabis workers from exploitation and extortion.

2. PUBLIC HEALTH & HARM REDUCTION
Legal regulation can be a powerful harm reduction tool, reducing stigma against people who use drugs, enabling access to health services, and guaranteeing a safe supply of drugs.

3. AUTONOMY, LIBERTY & PRIVACY
Regulations should seek a fair balance between individual rights to autonomy and privacy, and the protection of public health. All restrictions must be based on evidence.

4. ACCESSIBLE & NEEDS-BASED
To become a viable alternative to the informal supply, regulated markets need to be accessible, and to respond to the needs of people who use drugs, including users of cannabis-based medical products.

Social justice

5. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
Legal systems should be informed by the wealth of knowledge accumulated by people involved in currently illegal markets, from cultivators to people who transport, sell and use cannabis.

6. TRANSIT TO LEGALITY
Legal markets must support the participation of people and communities involved in informal drug economies by removing existing legal, financial, technical, and bureaucratic barriers.

7. SMALLER-SCALE GROWERS
To guarantee sustainable livelihoods for traditional cannabis farmers, legal regulations should prioritise their participation in supply, and ensure they are not displaced by new private actors.

8. REPARATION, SATISFACTION & NON-REPETITION
Legal frameworks must include reparations for people who suffered prohibition, redress rights violations, and allocate resources to those unjustly targeted.

9. TRADITIONAL USES
Legal regulations must recognise the value of cannabis' rich history of traditional, cultural, religious and medical uses, and ensure their preservation.

Inclusive & equitable trade

10. INCLUSIVE BUSINESS MODELS
Legal markets should seek to distribute power and value across the supply chain by enabling alternative business models that empower communities.

11. WORKERS RIGHTS
In a legal system, workers are entitled to labour rights and protections, which can be enforced through formal oversight mechanisms.

12. MAXIMISE VALUE
Regulators should work with producers and users to develop innovative certification schemes that bolster the competitiveness of small and medium-sized producers.

13. CHALLENGES TO INTERNATIONAL TRADE
Regulators should reflect on how to remove the legal barriers that impede the transnational trade of non-medical cannabis, while protecting traditional growers from the inflow of foreign capital.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY
To address potential environmental harms, legal frameworks must include strong regulations, as well as ecolabeling schemes, to promote sustainable practices throughout the supply chain.

Responses to activities outside of the legal market

15. DECRIMINALISE ALL DRUG USE & ANCILLARY ACTIVITIES
A socially just legal framework is not compatible with any form of criminal or administrative punishment for the personal use of any drug.

16. PROPORTIONALITY
Where retained, criminal justice responses to drug-related activities, such as drug trafficking, must be strictly proportionate, consider personal circumstances, and accompanied by support.

A gender-sensitive approach

17. WOMEN & CULTIVATION
In addressing the history of discrimination and harassment of women growers, legal regulations should establish gender-sensitive protections against exploitation and abuse.

18. ACCESS TO SERVICES
Legal regulations must promote gender-sensitive drug treatment and harm reduction services that respond to the specific needs of women.

19. EQUALITY
Regulators must take immediate action to address structural gender inequalities and power imbalances in legal cannabis markets.

Monitoring and learning

20. DATA COLLECTION & COMMUNITY FEEDBACK
Legal frameworks must be constantly reviewed in light of objective data, lessons learnt, the evolution of the market, and feedback provided by affected communities and civil society.