

Drug policy making in the Netherlands – the role of monitoring and evaluation

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Introduction

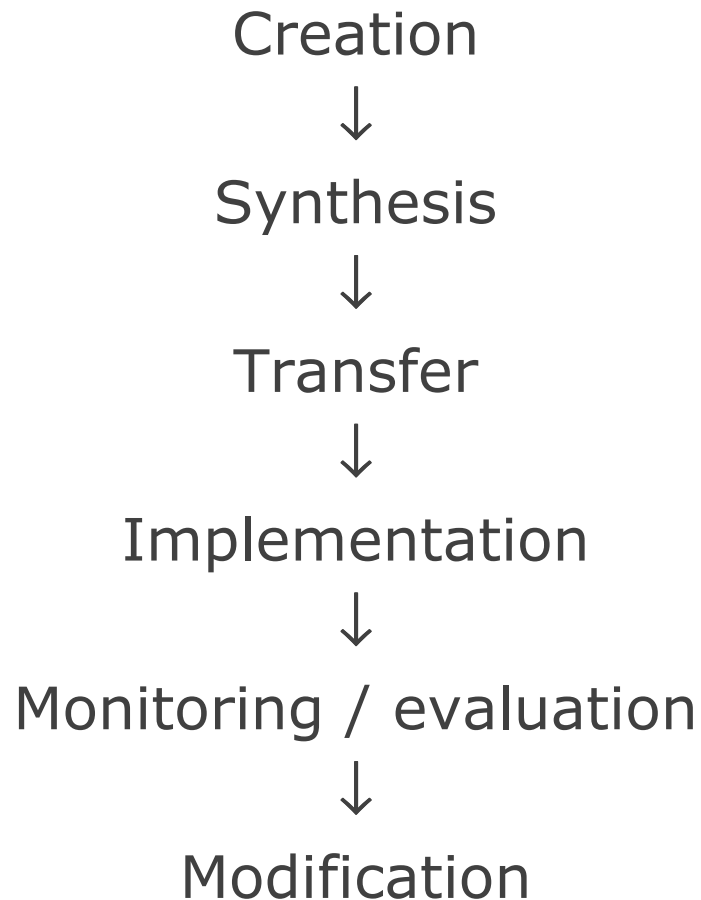
1. Profile of Trimbos Institute
2. Specifics of Dutch Drug Policy making
3. Objectives and tools of drug policy
4. Importance of monitoring and research
5. Role Trimbos in policy making
6. Concluding remarks

1. Trimbos Institute - profile

- Utrecht, the Netherlands, ± 250 staff, NGO
- Mission: To create and encourage the applied use of knowledge of mental health and the policy and practice of mental health care, addiction care and social care.
- Linking science/research, policy and practice

1. Trimbos Institute - profile

Knowledge cycle



1. Trimbos Institute - profile

- Core tasks:
 - Research
 - Development
 - Implementation
- Target group:
 - Practice
 - Policy

1. Trimbos Institute - activities

- Prevention
 - E.g. school based drug prevention, prevention of mental health problems
- Care (harm reduction)
 - E.g. prevention of infectious diseases and reducing health risks in nightlife settings
- Treatment
 - E.g. developing E-mental health applications
- Research
 - Epidemiology, Programme and Policy evaluation, Rapid Assessment and Response
- **Monitoring and evaluation**
 - National Drug Monitor+ National Focal Point
- **Policy**
 - Policy advice / training and policy evaluation

2. Specifics of Dutch Drug Policy

- No general Drug Strategy and Drug Action Plan for a fixed period
- Irregular general drug policy plans for the longer term
 - Generally made up by a new government
 - Most recent one: 2011 (not yet agreed)
 - Previous one made up in 1995
- Ad hoc policy papers on certain issues, e.g.
 - Cannabis letter
 - Ecstasy policy

3. Main objective Dutch drugs policy

To prevent harm to:

- individual users
- their social surroundings
- society as a whole

3. Integrated approach

- Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport:
 - coordinating drugs policy
 - prevention and care services
 - Opium act (Drug law)
- Ministry of Justice:
 - criminal law
- Ministry of Interior, Municipalities:
 - local government and police

3. Three tools

- Reduce demand: care and prevention
- Reduce supply: tackle organized crime
- Reduce drug related nuisance and maintain public order

3. Key notions in Dutch drug policy

- Realism: drugs / drug use endemic phenomenon
- Pragmatic rather than principle-based: do what works best
- Health protection and harm reduction
- Separation markets for hard and soft drugs: coffee shops
- Fact-based: Importance of monitoring and evaluation

4. Emphasis on evidence base for drug policy

- Growing understanding that monitoring and evaluation are indispensable elements of drug policy
- Making drug policy more fact and evidence based
- Improving quality and effectiveness of policy
- Facilitating innovation
- Increased investment in monitoring and evaluation of drug policy (implementation)
 - especially in the field of supply reduction

4. Monitoring and evaluation: fact base for drug policy making

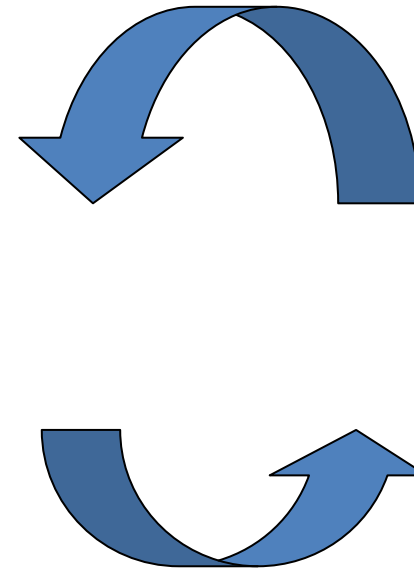
- Monitoring serves data for situation assessment
 - assessing the state of affairs
 - input for political debate
- Monitoring serves data for evaluation
- Monitoring and evaluation point of departure of policy cycle

4. Evaluation: giving direction for policy plans

- Measuring effectiveness of policy (measures)
- Assessing cost-effectiveness
- Both contributed to wider acceptance of HR
- Measuring intended impact
- Assessing unintended consequences

4. Policy Cycle

- Assessing situation and needs
- Formulating policy plans
- Political decisions
- Policy implementation
- Monitoring
- Evaluation
- Innovation/adaptations
- Implementation



5. Trimbos Institute: National Drug Monitor (NDM)

- NDM established at the Trimbos Institute in 1999 by the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sports
- Integrating all data / monitoring sources on the drug phenomenon
- To promote quality and cohesiveness between information sources
- To improve planning
- Key activities:
 - NDM Annual Report
 - Fact sheets on Dutch drug policy
 - National reports for the EMCDDA
 - Bulletins on specific topical subjects

5. Trimbos Institute: Policy research, evaluation and advice

- Drug policy evaluation (In the Netherlands and other countries)
- Drug policy research / analysis (national / international)
- Drug policy advice on the basis of monitoring, evaluation and analysis

5. 'The making of the Dutch 2011 drug policy paper'

- Debate on drug policy in Dutch parliament on 6 March 2008
- Announcement of a new drug policy paper
- Evaluation of Dutch drug policy by Trimbos Institute (with support of WODC)
- Published May 2009
- Advice and recommendation by Expert Committee
- New drug policy paper (announced for 2009)

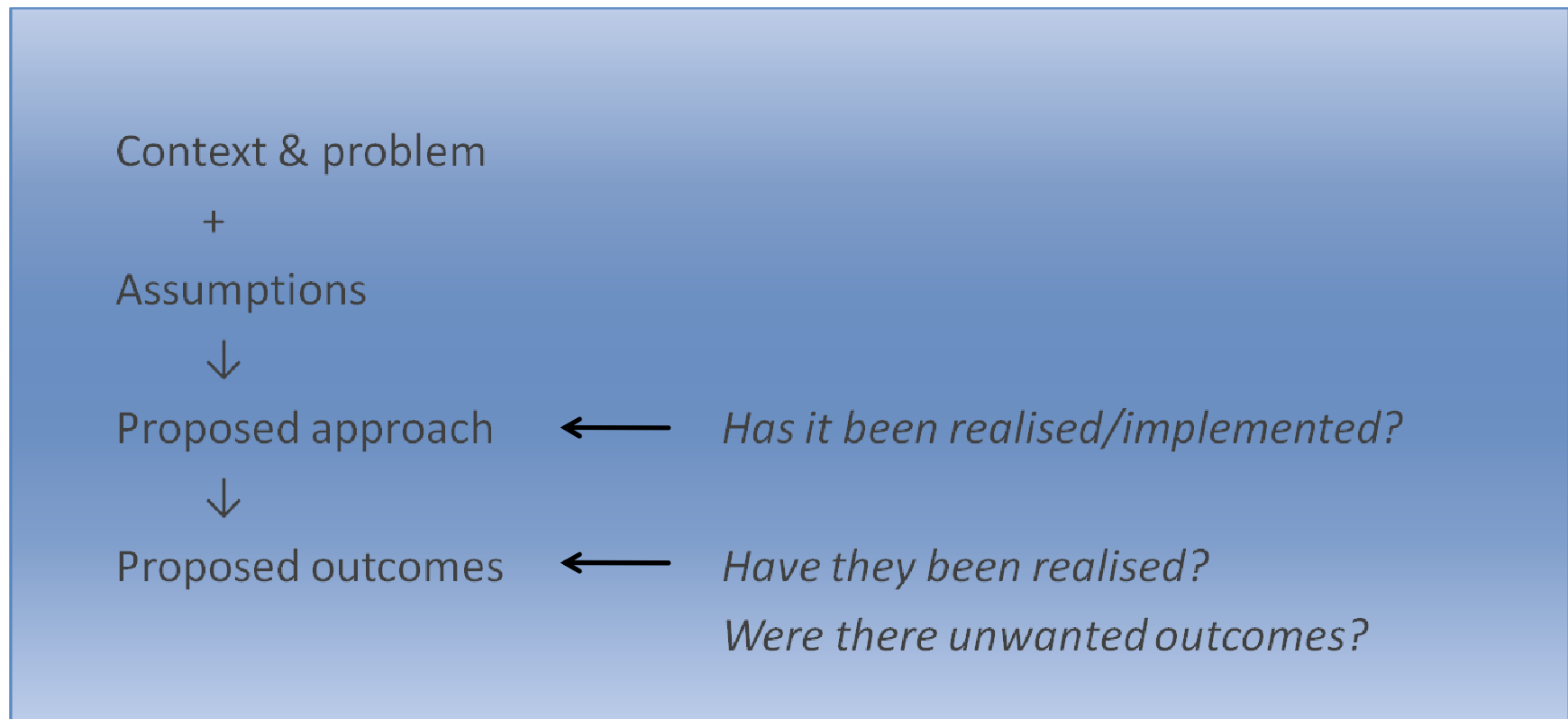
5. Dutch drug policy evaluation 2009

Main objectives:

- to assess the implementation of drug policy plans since the last general drug policy plan (1995)
 - Have the envisaged measures been taken
 - Have the envisaged results been achieved
- to assess the realisation of the main objective of Dutch drug policy:
'To prevent and manage the harms to individuals and society that ensue from drug use

5. Evaluation method (1)

Based on logic of 'policy theory' method



5. Evaluation method (2)

- Analysis of existing policy documents, scientific literature, registration data, (secondary) analyses of research data, interviews with experts
- Establishing 'effects' (causal relationships) of policy only possible in some sub-areas
- Period 1995 -2008 (*"Continuity and change"*)

5. General conclusions (1)

- Approach of demand reduction, harm reduction and supply reduction: implemented
- Drug consumption in general population: average and stabilising
- Health objectives: risk management OK

But:

- High-risk (cannabis) use amongst vulnerable youngsters, ecstasy use relatively high

5. General conclusions (2)

- Coffee shops: no evidence of negative side-effects
- Contribute to separation of markets hard drugs-cannabis
- Some success in reducing supply of ecstasy, cocaine and cannabis from Nld

But:

- Public nuisance around coffee shops in border regions, shifts in production and trafficking routes worldwide, involvement of international organised crime,

6. Concluding remarks

- Drug issue is loosing priority on the political agenda
- Reduced budget for demand reduction and research
- Increasing emphasis on reduction of supply and public nuisance
- Politicians' beliefs gain weight
- Evidence / research loses weight

**Thank you for your
attention**

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