

Belgian parties want medical marijuana agency

Friday, 08 February 2019 14:42



© Belga

The three parties in Belgium's outgoing government have come up with a bill seeking to establish a government agency to control the production of cannabis for therapeutic use.

The draft law has been proposed by Damien Thiery of the Reformist Movement (MR), Els Van Hoof of the Christian Democratic and Flemish (CD&V) party and Nele Lijnen (Open Vld). It entails the creation of a body within the Federal Agency for Medicines and Health Products, FAMHP, to control the production of standardised cannabinoid substances.

The benefits of cannabinoid therapy for relieving pain in cases of specific spasmodic symptoms, for example in patients suffering from multiple sclerosis or epilepsy, are well known. More specifically, the positive effects of cannabidiol (CBD) and CBD oil is increasingly supported by scientific research. CBD oil is neither psychotropic nor does it have any euphoric effect, according to the signatories of the proposed bill.

The United Nations Convention on Psychotropic Substances has called for such a body since 1961.

The proposed agency would be required to issue licenses to marijuana growers, authorize soils for cultivation, and control the harvesting and sale of medical marijuana by preserving a monopoly on import and export.

Research shows that therapeutic use of cannabinoids drastically relieves symptoms in the event of neuropathic pains and severe muscle contractions and can also slow down the progression of illnesses. Cannabinoid-based medication relieves pain and enhances sleep, appetite and general quality of life, the signatories add.

Mrs. Lijnen stressed, moreover, that Health Minister Maggie De Block (Open Vld) participated in the preparation of the bill, which had been blocked by the fall of the Government. It has therefore been introduced in parliament by the three legislators and is expected to be supported by opposition parties that are already in favour of the idea.

Belgium is not really in the vanguard where medicinal marijuana is concerned: many other countries have already lifted the obstacles to the use of therapeutic cannabinoids or are in the process of doing so.

*Oscar Schneider
The Brussels Times*