


TRANSFORM

Drug Policy Foundation

An abstract graphic featuring a complex network of interconnected nodes and lines, resembling a molecular structure or a data network. The nodes are primarily white and blue, with some red and orange nodes interspersed. The background is a blurred gradient of green and blue.

How to regulate Stimulants

A practical guide

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Why regulate stimulants

There is growing consensus that the ‘war on drugs’ has failed. Despite decades of attempts to suppress the trade, and untold billions spent on enforcement, the results have been disastrous. Production and consumption are higher than ever, and drug-related deaths are at record levels. Furthermore, the violence and exploitation created by placing a vast global industry in the hands of organised crime has only become worse. Acknowledgement that drug prohibition isn’t working has led to the legalisation and regulation of cannabis markets in a number of countries. However, this only addresses part of the problem while leaving some of the most catastrophic areas of global drug policy untouched.

Stimulant drugs – including cocaine, MDMA and amphetamines – account for a large proportion of the global drugs trade, and are cheaper, more widely available and more potent than ever. They are associated with a range of harms – from the violence endemic to cocaine supply, to the unnecessary deaths caused by the consumption of excessively strong MDMA pills. Many of these harms are a direct consequence of their illegality, and we can reduce them by taking a different approach. Drawing on international scholarship and best practice from legally regulated markets (including alcohol, tobacco, pharmaceuticals and cannabis), *How to regulate stimulants: a practical guide* sets out our vision for what this new approach should look like.





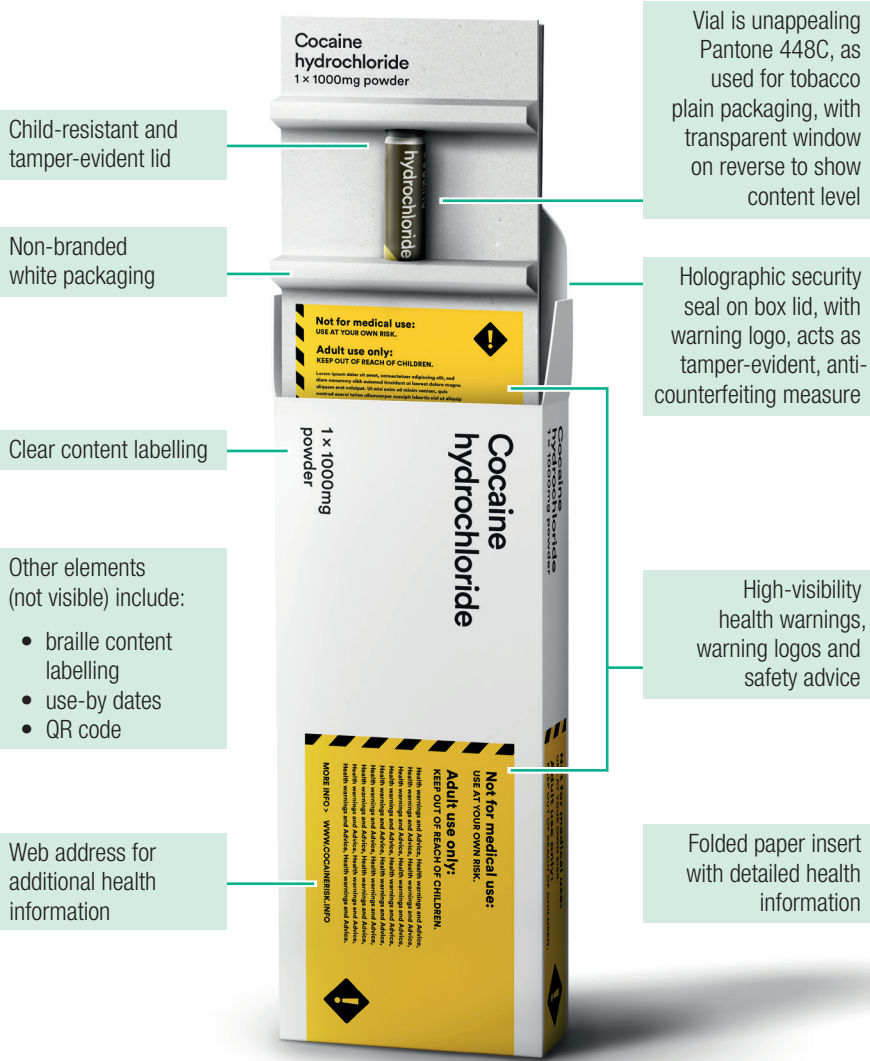
Core principles

Drug policy should improve public health, protect human rights and promote social justice. It should also be designed to reduce the crime, corruption and violence associated with drug supply.

At the same time, it is vital that drug policy protects against undue commercialisation, profit-seeking and excessive corporate influence on policy making. It is not sufficient to replace an unregulated, illegal market with a commercial alternative that is poorly regulated. A new legally regulated drug market should ensure that benefits are shared amongst communities as a whole, including marginalised groups previously involved in the illegal market, not limited to corporate interests or privileged groups.

While part of the motivation for legal regulation is the better protection of individual and community freedoms, drugs are not 'ordinary commodities'; therefore, they should be regulated in a way that reflects their risks. For this reason, we propose an overarching model based on strict government control over each stage of the supply chain. A key part of this would be a state monopoly over the retail stage, meaning only a dedicated government agency would be able to sell cocaine, MDMA and amphetamines. This is similar to the way alcohol sales are regulated in parts of Canada, USA and Scandinavia, or cannabis in some Canadian provinces. Within this system, and with variations to reflect national conditions and priorities, dedicated Drug Regulatory Agencies would be established to take responsibility for licensing production, monitoring and enforcing strict quality controls. Instead of unregulated supply chains rife with violence and exploitation, regulation would allow for strict labour standards. Any income

Cocaine packaging design proposal



generated from the supply of stimulants could support scaling up education, treatment and harm reduction activities, and promotion of sustainable development for communities historically impacted by the war on drugs, including producer and transit regions.

Under a responsible, non-commercial system of this kind, there would be no profit incentive for outlets to increase sales, meaning public health goals could take precedence. Advertising would not be allowed and unbranded products would be sold through dedicated, pharmacy-style outlets. These outlets would not sell other drugs, including alcohol, and staff would be specially trained. This approach would facilitate a fundamental readjustment in drug policy, establishing a different economic and cultural approach to supply that focuses on public health and social justice.

Regulation model

Production

States would establish a dedicated Drug Regulatory Agency to license the production and retail of stimulants. Quality control standards would ensure product content and potency is known and consistent, reducing accidental overdose and poisonings. International trading arrangements would help prevent corporate capture and establish fair trade principles. They would also protect interests of economically marginalised individuals and communities involved in the drug trade, including drug crop producers.

Products

Products would be sold in unbranded child and tamper resistant plain packaging with clear content labelling, standardised dosages, and high-visibility health information based on pharmaceutical product standards. Amphetamines and MDMA would be available as pills, and cocaine as powder. Prices would be determined by the Drug Regulatory Agency, and be regularly reviewed. Specific low-potency, lower-risk preparations (e.g. mild coca or ephedra tea) could be made available for sale more widely, outside of these specialist outlets, with fewer restrictions.

Vendors and outlets

Products would be sold from specialist pharmacy-style outlets, with staff trained to provide consumers with information about drug risks, harm reduction, and services. Location and hours of sale would be determined by local authorities according to national guidelines, allowing for a degree of flexibility where needed. There would be statutory controls on external signage, product display and point-of-sale marketing, forbidding promotional elements. Stimulants would not be sold in other shops, or in licensed entertainment venues.

Purchasers

Sales would be available to adults only. Individual purchases would be limited to 5 × 30mg MDMA in pill form, 4 × 10mg dexamphetamine, 1 gram of powder cocaine.

Marketing

Products would be unbranded and subject to a complete ban on advertising, sponsorship and other forms of product marketing.

Higher risk products

Smokable stimulant preparations, such as crack cocaine or crystal methamphetamine would not be available for retail. People who smoke (or inject) stimulants would not be criminalised, but would instead have access to comprehensive treatment, health and harm reduction services (including supervised consumption spaces, and options for substitute prescribing) as well as wrap-around support. The goal is to encourage lower-risk use in safer environments, while maintaining a supportive health-based approach to those who continue to engage in high risk use.

Next steps

Our proposals for responsible regulation aim to meet demand for stimulants, while moderating high-risk use and curtailing the destructive effects of the unregulated, illegal trade. They would, as far as possible, remove commercial incentives to increase use while establishing a public health-led system of provision.

How to regulate stimulants: a practical guide is the first full-length attempt to lay out a detailed alternative to prohibition in this area. Its goal is to stimulate debate on a critical issue where policy solutions have been lacking. The continuing failure of the war on drugs, and the terrible additional harms it has generated, necessitates an alternative approach. This book is an invitation to everyone concerned with drug policy failures to join that debate and help bring about positive change.

How to regulate Stimulants

A practical guide

As consensus grows that the 'war on drugs' has failed, so does the need for a frank exploration of the alternatives. It is essential that we begin a serious discussion on how we regulate stimulants. This book provides a powerful start

Rt Hon Helen Clark

Chair of the Global Commission on Drug Policy,
former Prime Minister of New Zealand and
Administrator of the United Nations
Development Programme

I lost my two sons on the same night after they took MDMA of unknown purity and strength. It's time to accept drug use happens and find ways to make it safer. I hope this book helps make those reforms a reality

Ray Lakeman

Campaigner with Anyone's Child:
Families for Safer Drug Control

If we are serious about reducing harms we need a grown up conversation about what moving beyond prohibition could mean in practice. *How to regulate stimulants* is an important step in that direction

Carl L. Hart, Ph.D.

Ziff Professor of Psychology (in Psychiatry),
Columbia University

Having witnessed the human tragedy of the 'war on drugs' first hand in Colombia I can testify to the need for credible alternatives. Transform are bringing us a step nearer to ending this policy disaster



Sir Keith Morris

Former UK Ambassador to Colombia

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