

Czech Government's Head of Drug Policy Forced to Resign: International Letter of Support

In recent years, the Czech republic has become a model in sensible drug policy. This feat was largely due to the tireless efforts of **Jindřich Vobořil, the Czech Government's National Drug Policy Coordinator (2010–2018, 2021–2024)**.

On 9 July 2024, reportedly under pressure from different interest groups, Jindřich Vobořil resigned from his Government positions, as he was in the final line before the presentation of a bill to regulate the market for psychoactive cannabis.

For us, experts in drug policy from around the world, Jindřich Vobořil has also been a vocal advocate of reason, science, and of a non-conflicted approach to the most sensitive topics, like the regulation of cannabis and other products, the inclusion of people who use drugs in policy design, and the access to prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and care programmes.

At all United Nations meetings, within the European Union apparatus, and in national drug policy dialogues across Europe, Asia, and South America, Vobořil has been the ultimate ambassador for the Czech Republic as a nation advancing human rights, international cooperation and dialogue, and a “peace on drugs.” Amidst often morose and low-level drug policy debates, Vobořil articulated an uncommon but solid and rational approach:

- Drugs and addiction policies must be aimed at protecting the most vulnerable groups of the population, namely children and adolescents, people in difficult situations, and people with mental health problems.
- The market for drugs needs to be regulated according to the degree of harm and the dependence potential associated with each product.
- Policy and intervention must be based on scientifically-proven information and evidence.
- The regulated availability of less harmful substances is more effective than a complete prohibition, from the point of view of prevention.
- Prevention and treatment deserve more attention (and budget) than the statutory regulations themselves and are, according to all indicators, the most effective part of addiction policies.
- Addiction policies must apply the “harm reduction” approach, that is, an approach aimed at minimising the harms and other negative impacts on human rights.

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Vobořil's track record in government is exemplary in implementing —or advocating for the implementation of— well-proven health and harm reduction initiatives, as well as novel and innovative policy approaches to drug control and regulation, criminal justice reform, and the protection of human rights.

15 years ago, Vobořil led efforts to decriminalise the possession of small quantities of drugs. Back in his position in recent years, he implemented a series of ground-breaking reforms, including applying dependence policies to activities such as gambling; opening medical cannabis access; raising THC threshold to 1% for industrial hemp farmers; regulating Psychomodulatory substances, or a Cannabis legalisation bill, still in the works as he leaves his position. Vobořil was a crucial advocate for, and supporter of WHO's scientific review of cannabis and posterior international rescheduling. During the Czech presidency of the European Union, he headed the negotiations for the *EU Council Conclusions on human rights-based approach in drug policies* (15818/22, 9 Dec. 2022).

Although we were shocked to learn that private interests and moral entrepreneurs pressured him out of his position, we are grateful to Jindřich for years of effort, for his teachings, for leading by

example, and for his tireless work. **We call on all policymakers, worldwide, to learn from his achievements and follow in his courageous footsteps. We also call on the Czech government to continue Mr. Vobořil's filed proposals on modern and more humane legislation, and to continue listening to his voice in this field.**

Signed in agreement:

1. **Kenzi Riboulet-Zemouli**, Cannabis Embassy; and Forum Drugs Mediterranean-FAAAT (France)
2. **Myrtle Clarke**, Fields of Green for ALL NPC (South Africa) and Cannabis Embassy
3. **Matt Wilson**, Open Society Foundations (2008-2024)
4. **Axel Bernabe**, Former New York State Cannabis Regulator (2015-2024) (USA)
5. **Zara Snapp**, Director, Instituto RIA (Mexico)
6. **Òscar Parés**, ICEERS Foundation (Spain)
7. **Constanza Sánchez Avilés**, ICEERS Foundation (Spain)
8. **Shaleen Title**, Former Commissioner, Massachusetts Cannabis Control Commission 2017-2020 (USA)
9. **Aura Roig**, Director, Metzineres, Barcelona (Spain)
10. **Karen Mamo**, National Focal Point, Correlation European Harm Reduction Network (Malta)
11. **John Walsh**, Washington Office on Latin America (USA)
12. **Kassandra Frederique**, Drug Policy Alliance (USA)
13. **Tom Blickman**, TNI - Transnational Institute (Netherlands)
14. **Paulo José dos Reis Pereira**, International Drug Policy Research Group - PUC-SP (Brazil)
15. **Andrew Bonello**, ReLeaf Malta
16. **Sanho Tree**, Institute for Policy Studies (USA)
17. **Paisan Suwannawong**, Co-founder, Thai Drug User Network (Thailand)
18. **Katrin Schiffer**, Executive Director, Correlation-European Harm Reduction Network
19. **Steve Rolles**, Transform Drug Policy Foundation (UK)
20. **Giulia Federica Zampini**, Associate Professor of criminology and social policy, University of Greenwich (UK)
21. **Florent Buffière**, NORML France (France); Ucañamo SAC (Peru)
22. **Niamh Eastwood**, Release (UK)
23. **Leonardo Fiorentini**, Secretary, Forum Droghe (Italy)
24. **Colleen Daniels**, Harm Reduction International (UK)
25. **Felipe Neis Araujo**, Lecturer in Criminology, University of Manchester (UK)
26. **Mo George**, Open Society Foundation
27. **Alejandra García**, LANPUD - Red Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Personas que Usan Drogas (México)
28. **Francesca Brivio Grill**, Proyecto Soma (Peru)
29. **Chelsea Higgs Wise**, Executive Director, Marijuana Justice (USA)
30. **Núria Calzada**, Kykeon Analytics (Spain)
31. **Abou Mere**, Director, Kripa Foundation, Nagaland (India)
32. **Bikas Gurung**, Regional Coordinator, NAPUD - Network of Asian People who Use Drugs
33. **Angela McBride**, Executive Director, SANPUD - South African Network of People who Use Drugs
34. **Milutin Milošević**, Executive Director, DPNSEE - Drug Policy Network South East Europe

35. **Ahmed Said**, Regional Coordinator, AfricaNPUD - African Network of People who Use Drugs
36. **Christos Anastasiou**, Coordinator, PeerNUPS (Greece)
37. **Farid Ghehiouèche**, ENCOD (Austria); Cannabis Sans Frontières (France)
38. **Susanna Ronconi**, Scientific Board, Forum Droghe (Italy)
39. **Judy Chang**, Executive Director, INPUD - International Network of People who Use Drugs
40. **Ruby Lawlor**, Executive Director, Youth RISE International
41. **Aleksei Lakhov**, Executive Director, EuroNPUD - European Network of People who Use Drugs
42. **Machteld Busz**, Executive Director, Mainline (Netherlands)
43. **Steph Sherer**, Founder & President, Americans for Safe Access (USA)
44. **Ganna Dovbakh**, Executive Director, Eurasian Harm Reduction Association (Lithuania)
45. **Sergii Dvoriak**, Founder & Director, Ukrainian Institute on Public Health Policy (Ukraine)
46. **Louise Vincent**, National Survivors Union, The Leadership Team (USA)
47. **Louise Vincent**, Executive Director, NC Survivors Union (USA)
48. **Nick Voyles**, NSU Leadership Team; Executive Director, Indiana Recovery Alliance (USA)
49. **Ernesto Cortés Amador**, Executive Director, ACEID - Asociación Costarricense para el Estudio e Intervención en Drogas (Costa Rica)
50. **Jane Dicka**, Coordinator, PaNPUD - Pacific and Oceanic Network of People who Use Drugs
51. **Gregory Dore**, Program Head of Viral Hepatitis Clinical Research Program, Kirby Institute UNSW (Australia)
52. **Jason Grebely**, Head of Hepatitis C and Drug Use Group, Viral Hepatitis Clinical Research Program, Kirby Institute, University of New South Wales (Australia)
53. **Daphne Chronopoulou**, Chair, EuroNPUD
54. **Rui Coimbra Morais**, CASO - Consumidores Organizados Sobrevivem Organizados (Portugal)
55. **Ben Collins**, Co-director, ReShape
56. **Jan Stola**, Executive director, Youth Organisations for Drug Action
57. **Wim Vandeveld**, GNP+ - Global Network of People Living with HIV (South Africa)
58. **Annie Madden**, Executive Director, Harm Reduction Australia
59. **Peter Sarosi**, Rights Reporter Foundation (Hungary)
60. **Harriet Langanke**, Director, GSSG – Germany’s Charitable Foundation Sexuality and Health
61. **Nicholas Boyce**, Policy Director, Canadian Drug Policy Coalition (Canada)
62. **Ean Seeb**, Governor's Special Advisor on Cannabis and Natural Medicine, State of Colorado (USA)
63. **Gernot Klantschnig**, Principal Investigator, Cannabis Africana Project, University of Bristol (UK)
64. **John Gobeil**, Chief Executive Officer, AIVL - Australian Injecting and Illicit Drug Users League
65. **Nazlee Maghsoudi**, Manager, Policy Impact Unit, Centre on Drug Policy Evaluation (Canada)
66. **Lisa Sanchez**, Executive Director, MUCD - México Unido Contra la Delincuencia A.C. (Mexico)
67. **Michelle Mateus Yepes**, Executive Director, Deliberar ORG (Colombia)
68. **M^a. Inez Feria**, NoBox Philippines
69. **Tatyana Sleiman**, Executive Director, Skoun Lebanese Addictions Center (Lebanon)
70. **Camille Spire**, Chair, AIDES (France)
71. **Andrzej Celinski**, Workers for Ethical Substance Use Policy (Canada)
72. **Ann Fordham**, Executive Director, International Drug Policy Consortium (UK)

73. **Jonathan Leighton**, Executive Director, OIPS - Organisation for the Prevention of Intense Suffering (Switzerland)
74. **Leonardo R. Perez**, Associate Researcher, Pierre du Bois Foundation (Switzerland)
75. **Kai-Friedrich Niermann**, Lawyer, KFN+ (Germany)
76. **Lisa Haag**, Founder & Managing Partner, MJ Universe GmbH (Germany)

France, South Africa, USA, Mexico, Spain, Malta, Netherlands, Brazil, Thailand, Peru, Italy, India, Greece, Austria, Lithuania, Ukraine, Costa Rica, Australia, Portugal, Hungary, Canada, UK, Colombia, Philippines, Lebanon, Switzerland, Germany