



In an about face, the United Nations on Wednesday lavishly praised drug decriminalization in its annual report on the state of global drug policy. In previous years, the UN drug czar had expressed skepticism about Portugal's decriminalization, which removed criminal penalties in 2001 for personal drug possession and emphasized treatment over incarceration. The UN had suggested the policy was in violation of international drug treaties and would encourage "drug tourism."

But in its 2009 World Drug Report, the UN had little but kind words for Portugal's radical (by U.S. standards) approach. "These conditions keep drugs out of the hands of those who would avoid them under a system of full prohibition, while encouraging treatment, rather than incarceration, for users. Among those who would not welcome a summons from a police officer are tourists, and, as a result, Portugal's policy has reportedly not led to an increase in drug tourism," reads the report. "It also appears that a number of drug-related problems have decreased."

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