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Instagram's Role in Shaping Germany's Cannabis Policy

How does the public discussion through Instagram influence the policy agenda of cannabis
legalisation in Germany?

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Abstract

This paper analyses how public engagement on Instagram influences the agenda-setting for cannabis legalisation in Germany, using concepts like agenda-setting, framing, and priming. The applied methodology comprises an analysis through coding of Instagram comments under selected posts and three interviews with diverse members of the Health Committee. Within the comment analysis, the focus is on the dominant discussed topics and the overall sentiments towards German cannabis legalisation. The interview results aimed to observe how the politicians perceived the discussion on Instagram and to get insights into the influence of the public discussion on the Health Committee. The results are contextualised within the theoretical frameworks, thereby elucidating the role of social media in contemporary political communication. Leading to the study's key findings, indicate that public debate on Instagram exerted a considerable influence on the content and formulation of cannabis legislation. Altogether, this aims to address a gap in the existing literature by focusing on the impact of social media on policymakers, offering limited insights into how Instagram shape policy agendas in modern politics. All of this together led to the conclusion that the public discussion on Instagram dominates the media agenda of politicians rather than the agenda of cannabis legalisation.

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Abbreviations

CanG	Cannabis Law ¹
CBL ²	Cannabis Legalisation
CDU	Christian Democratic Union of Germany
CSU	Christian Social Union of Germany
SPD	Social Democratic Party of Germany
THC	Tetrahydrocannabinol

¹ Translated from German

² Applied in illustrations

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1. Introduction

“Cannabis: Legal, but really risky - Cannabis can permanently damage the brain - especially in individuals under 25 years old.”³ (Bundesministerium für Gesundheit. n.d.).

This is one of the German Federal Ministry of Health's campaign slogans on Instagram associated with the German cannabis legalisation. On April 1st, 2024, cannabis was decriminalised in Germany, although it is commonly referred to as legalisation (Bundestag, 2023). In preparing the law, there were extensive discussions and criticisms from newspapers, public broadcasters, politicians, and citizens on Instagram. Social media, a relatively new phenomenon of digitalisation, provides ample room for new research approaches. Given the debates, exploring how these criticisms impact the policymaking process is important. The Agenda-Setting Theory is highly relevant here, emphasising the media's increasing influence, especially through social media, which has sparked numerous case studies on this new phenomenon, as listed further.

The main research question examines how public discussion on Instagram affects agenda-setting for cannabis legalisation, utilising explanatory agenda-setting theory, framing, and priming concepts. Sub-questions serve as intermediary steps. The research question draws on the relationship between the two variables cannabis legalisation and public discussion on Instagram, with politicians and the health committee as representatives of policy in this paper. In detail, the paper intended to answer the questions of how public engagement through Instagram influences policy formulation and agenda-setting regarding cannabis legalisation in Germany following three guiding sub-questions (SQs)

SQ1: How has the legal and social landscape of cannabis in Germany evolved, and what are the implications of its legalisation?

SQ2: How have the experiences of other countries with the legalisation of cannabis influenced the debate on Instagram?

SQ3: How did the politicians experience and deal with the public discussion on Instagram?

Following those questions, the paper follows a strict structure.

In the first step, a literature review was to understand the theoretical concepts of Agenda-Setting-Theory, Framing and Priming has been done to get a greater understanding of how those concepts and theories relate to social media and politics. Independent from those concepts and theories the relevance of Instagram in political science is being observed to classify and present the platform briefly. The cannabis legalisation has been left out in this step and examined in a step further containing the latest history of cannabis as a drug in Germany, the broad content and concepts behind cannabis legalisation. As a

³ Translated from German

comparison, some other cases from other countries will be described briefly. All together the observations were applied to answering SQ1.

The method section described the data collection through the collection of comments under topic-related posts on Instagram and interviews with three members of the German Health Committee. The analysis was conducted through coding.

The results of both parts are being presented separately. In the first step, we will analyse the collected comments to identify important topics and sentiments mentioned by the users. This step includes answering SQ2. In the second step of the presentation of the results, it will be looked at the interviews. Within the analysis, it was looked at how the interviewed politicians perceived the discussion on Instagram and its influence on the agenda of the German cannabis legalisation which led to answering SQ3. A step further the results will be discussed based on the literature review and conceptual framework for the cannabis legalisation. In this part of the paper, the main points are discussing and comparing the frames analysed by the researcher and perceived by the interviews. Additionally, it will look at the observed relationship between Instagram and politics in the selected case within the interviews. At the end, the main observation is presented which indirectly leads to answering the main research question in the conclusion by reflecting on the results and limitations.

As this is a relatively new phenomenon, the current data situation is not sufficient. Topic-specific limitations are broken down in more detail in the theoretical concept, for a more precise reference to the topic. Here is a rough summary of the research gap.

Social media intertwines social networks, personal information channels, and mass media, offering vast opportunities and posing significant challenges for both information creators and consumers in today's digital landscape (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2012). While various open-source and proprietary social media analytics tools cater to business and marketing needs, systematic frameworks and suitable methods for tracking and analysing social media data in the political domain are currently lacking (2012). This represents a scientific gap given cannabis legalisation's novelty and controversy, providing an opportunity to understand how public opinion shapes policymaking, and what is necessary for the two sides, politicians and voters, to better understand the relationship between them since Marwala (2023) states a change of power dynamics through social media. Further, studying the influence of public discussion via Instagram on cannabis legalisation is scientifically relevant due to the novelty of the law and the ongoing nature of the discussion, especially on social media platforms. Cannabis as a drug that becomes legal offers a special case here, as it is simultaneously seen as critical by policymakers, but is legalised in the same step, as can be seen from the campaign slogan (Bundesministerium für Gesundheit. n.d.).

2. Conceptual Framework

Conceptual frameworks serve as the foundation upon which our understanding of the influence of public opinion on the agenda-setting of cannabis legalisation in Germany is constructed, providing both structure and depth to our analysis. In essence, the study of public opinion is inextricably linked to the concepts of agenda-setting, priming and framing (Buturoiu, et al., 2023).

2.1. Literature Review

2.1.1 Agenda-Setting-Theory

McCombs (2013) delineates that agenda-setting emphasises the transfer of issues from the media to the public agenda and the impact of issue characteristics highlighted in the media on public perceptions. The Agenda-Setting Theory of media postulates that the media plays a role in the management of crises, the promotion of behavioural change in the health sector and the assurance of freedom of expression and good governance (Mohammed et al. 2022).

The Agenda-Setting Theory, as proposed by Walter Lippmann, as cited in Grzywinska, & Borden (2012), posits that the media plays a role in creating a constructed world that shapes public opinion. The question now is how this image is perceived outside of the media world. Firstly, the public agenda represents topics considered important by the population, while the political agenda includes the priorities of political entities, identifiable through party-program analysis (Bulkow & Schweiger, 2013). They are linked, as the public agenda can influence the political agenda (2013).

Agenda-setting is based on the handling of information that goes beyond mere accessibility, such as perceived relevance and uncertainty (Weaver, 2007). Policy agenda-setting is influenced by reality, media, and public agendas, as well as perceived agendas in media, interpersonal, societal, and intrapersonal spheres, shaping policy salience (Bulkow, & Schweiger, 2013). Weaver, (1981) refers in his definition of a political agenda to McCombs who defines the political agenda as the set of issues under discussion within a political system at a given time. Walgrave & Van Aelst (2006) present an argument against the existence of a unified political agenda, suggesting that the motivations of politicians are self-serving and shape their individual agendas (2006). In this context, reference should be made to several approaches that address the benefits of social media in politics (2006).

The agenda in politics embeds a plan for discussion and/or action among groups and individuals (Warner, 2022). Agenda-setting is a key aspect of decision-making in government (2022). As governments cannot address all issues, setting their policy agenda is a competitive process involving various stakeholders (2022). Further, elected politicians face several challenges in addressing the interests of the public due to diversity (2022). Yet, the political agenda is not a rigid product (2022). For example, in some discussions, it takes an example from other policies, either in its own country or

beyond its borders, mistakes and policy implications can appear and resolve fixed points once again (2022).

Referring to social media, Feezel (2017) observed that social media has a significant impact on the perception of politics in the contemporary era. It is not merely an information platform but also an exchange platform (2017). According to Marwala (2023), the influence of social media on politics is profound because it changes traditional power dynamics between the individual, the public and the politics. In the case of politics, governments are subject to an intangible pace of dissemination of information, views and ideas (2023). Moreover, the parties' social media agendas provide an insight into the political nature of the party (Gilardi et al., 2021). In general, political and social media balance each other out (2021).

Further, social media plays a significant role in the realm of politics as serves as a conduit for dialogue between various actors (Faber et al., 2020). In detail, it simplifies the form of contact with society and the electorate (2020). Improved or at least more intensive communication can potentially foster greater engagement on both sides, namely politics and the people, on social media and off (2020). Moreover, this form of communication shapes the dynamics of political competition among political actors (2020).

A study by Hopke (2015) proved that social media platforms enable real-time engagement and participation in events and promote activism (2015). Primarily on the user side, there is the opportunity for coordination, reinforcing collective identity, and sharing information (2015). Nevertheless, social media platforms address a certain niche and are internal rather than reaching a large external audience (2015). Further, a study by Mergel (2013) which focused on the use of public authorities stated that they are using social media as an additional channel to interact with citizens, focusing on educational and informational value (2013). Transparent information and improved literacy promote collaboration and growth (Lee, et al., 2020).

2.1.2. Framing in Media

In the classical sense, framing means that the perception of a public problem is influenced by the formulation of a topic (Sniderman & Theriault, 2004). Framing effects influence decision-making behaviour at different levels, from the individual to the political, which depends on small factors in the presentation of an issue (2004). The effect of framing is discussed in a study on the framing of AIDS, which found that the social agenda in South Korea related to AIDS has changed significantly due to media framing, in which AIDS was first framed as sexual immorality but then a more diverse way of reporting AIDS emerged which affected the perception of the issue (Jung, 2013). Another study proved that framing plays a central role in shaping user engagement with the immigration discourse on social media (Mendelsohn, et al., 2021). While issue-specific frames are particularly influential on audience responses, narrative framing also has a significant impact on engagement (2021). Both episodic and

thematic narrative frames increase user interaction, with issue frames having the strongest effect, highlighting the importance of narrative clarity and diversity in online discussions (2021).

It is relevant for researchers to note the construction of frames is based on narratives about events and issues, cultural norms, organisational pressures and lobbying (Moy, et al. 2016). They reflect conflicts in public discourse influenced by advocates, interest groups, and journalists (2016). Frame-setting involves associating concepts with public problems and influencing judgements and policy preferences (2016). It occurs subtly, influencing audiences' interpretations of news without them realising it, and can have a significant impact on emerging or less important issues (2016).

Frames can act as a link and an addition to the understanding of agenda-setting, but they are a separate field of research, as they deal with the perception of information on the part of individuals (Howlett, 2022 as cited in Buturoiu, et al., 2023). It is therefore considered a persuasion model (2023).

Framing studies have evolved positively, with clearer theoretical foundations and a diversified research agenda encompassing social media dynamics (Rabadán, 2021). Challenges include comprehensive process analysis, balanced methodological approaches, and understanding new factors like platform influence and visual framing's impact (2021).

In the theoretical area of framing, previous research has suggested that user comments can significantly influence people's attitudes towards news topics and may serve as a framing device (Leong, 2022). On the other hand, it is not known what the extent of the influence is, or whether it is strong or rather weak (2022). According to Leong (2022), the research is not yet enough and repeatedly encountering contradictions. In general, however, user comments play an important role in determining frames in the field of social media (2022).

2.1.2.1 Frames in Politics

Findings from a study by Van Der Meer & Verhoeven (2013) demonstrate that media coverage of political events and the accompanying public framing are influenced by personal speculations, with a notable increase in public criticism of government actions following the coverage. Furthermore, in terms of framing, it is important to always consider the political context in political issues, as different political parties express their frames differently (Johnson et al., 2017). Including party affiliation improves the prediction of frames (2017). This can primarily be attributed to the fact that, according to additional studies, political actors optimise their frames to be favoured by the media to dominate substantial discourses, conflicts, and personalization, and indirectly steer or even dramatise them (Strömbäck, 2008 as cited in Matthes, 2011). These tendencies are generally perceived as negative because they follow media logic rather than the interests of the citizens, which is viewed critically, especially concerning the audience framing issues differently than suggested by political elites or journalists (Wettstein, 2012, as cited in Matthes, 2011). In other fields of science, this phenomenon in the media is referred to as the game frame, specifically aimed at influencing public opinion, dominating political debates, and overall

politics (Aalberg, et al., 2011). Political actors construct a media-related strategy frame that revolves around interpreting the motives of non-political and political actors to effectively shape their campaigns (2011). This involves utilising media logic instrumentalization by political actors to develop media strategies, thus designing strategy frames accordingly (2011).

2.1.3. Priming in Media

In the classical sense, priming in one of the definitions means that a stimulus can manifest as emotions, decisions, or external circumstances. (Bermeitinger, 2015). Concerning media, priming is based on the information individuals receive through media channels (Moy, et al. 2016). The information a person receives is often filtered through their prior knowledge (2016). This filtering process already determines how the information received is evaluated (2016). The media priming effect is observed when viewers associate analysed images with stimuli that may not have been activated without prior knowledge (2016). An early study by Domke et al. (1998) argues that media framing emphasizes certain dimensions of issues while excluding others. Altogether, this can foster priming effects, especially when framing activates the moral and ethical understanding of information receivers (1998).

In general, primes in the media can influence people's mindsets and attitudes, including in politics (Ottati, et al., 2016). Positive and negative non-political influences can influence political thoughts and have mood effects on political attitudes (2016). This effect can be reversed for people with a high level of political expertise. Randomly triggered effects influence moral judgements and political attitudes differently (2016). Metaphors in political and non-political communication shape perceptions and political judgements (2016). Here, metaphors can serve as frames that emphasise certain aspects of political goals while downplaying others (2016). Therefore, metaphors serve as framing on the one hand, but are subordinate to priming effects, as stimuli stimulate and influence reactions (2016).

Priming is not a component of agenda-setting theory, but an independent concept related to activation theory in psychology (Buturoiu, et al., 2023). Nevertheless, in some cases, it can be seen as an extension of the agenda-setting process as a logical consequence (2023). Priming refers to the cognitive processes by which individuals form political judgements about issues (2023). Concerning agenda-setting, both refer to the attention-based cognitive processes of individuals influenced by the media. (Weaver, 2007). Agenda-setting considers factors that go beyond pure accessibility, such as perceived relevance and uncertainty, while priming focuses primarily on the accessibility of information (Takeshita, 2006, as cited in Weaver, 2007). Both concepts are about influencing public perception through the portrayal of topics or objects in the media (2007). Yet, priming does not categorise all easily accessible information as important, which illustrates the difference between perceived importance and accessibility (2007).

2.1.4. Relevance of Instagram

With the latest developments, Instagram has emerged as one of the most popular image-centric social media platforms, proving its utility as a strategic tool for enhancing the self-presentation of public

figures and for directly engaging target audiences (Turnbull-Dugarte, 2019 as cited in Uluçay & Melek, 2021). Including Instagram in research is therefore relevant, especially since previous studies on politicians' social media activities have primarily focused on Facebook and Twitter (Peng, 2021 as cited in Uluçay & Melek, 2021). Especially among younger populations, Instagram is widely used as a quick source of information on social media (Sormanen, et al., 2022). For this reason, traditional media have also expanded into social media, in addition to entirely new channels on social media, to take advantage of the benefits such as direct communication with the target audience (Malmelin & Villi, 2016; Selva, 2016, as cited in Sormanen et al., 2022). Social media has changed traditional media mechanisms through new digital channels, yet especially visual social media platforms remain understudied (Pearce et al., 2019 as cited in Molder et al., 2021). Additionally, social media provides access to political topics and movements for a very large audience (Molder et al., 2021).

The framing of political issues on Instagram becomes particularly significant amidst the rapidly increasing trend of personalizing politics and continuous campaigning, along with associated strategies to strengthen personal connections with the public, especially with the electorate (Entman, 1993; Moy Tewksbury et al., 2016, as cited in Lalancette & Raynald, 2020). In terms of public relations, the results of a priming study in economics demonstrate that a negative decision harms the public's perceptions of organisations (Doyle & Lee, 2016). Consequently, each actor aims to ensure that positive context leads to positive connotations as a priming effect (2016).

2.1.5. Cannabis on Instagram

First of all, in the international language of science cannabis can sometimes be named marijuana which is another word for the same drug (Lafaye et al., 2017). The research on cannabis on Instagram is either rare or focused on medicinal cannabis. A study of sentiment towards medical cannabis on Instagram found that users portrayed cannabis as a safe and natural remedy for many health conditions (Khademi et al., 2024). In addition, a study by Cavazos-Rehg et al, (2016), which analysed marijuana-related posts, emphasised that the user base of over a third of 16-24-year-olds on Instagram and the benefits of marijuana use in this population group is under ten per cent of the % 12 to 17-year-olds, but nearly twenty per cent in the age group of 18 to 24-year-olds. Cavazos-Rehg et al, (2016) conclude based on those numbers' interference between Instagram users and consumers of cannabis.

2.2. The Cannabis Legalisation

In this section, SQ1 is answered part by part.

2.2.1. Content and History

First, the history of German cannabis legalisation is complex. A study from 2023 on German cannabis consumption and trends between 1995 and 2021 in consumption observed that cannabis consumption in Germany is expected to increase among adults between 18 and 59 (Olderbak et al., 2023). The study

also suggests a link, albeit only marginal, between increasing consumption and the COVID-19 pandemic (2023). Further, even if cannabis was decriminalised in 2024 under the coalition of the SPD, the BÜNDNIS90/ GRÜNEN and the FDP, there were several events before that. The first example of a civic protest campaign in favour of cannabis legalisation was the ‘Hanfparade’ (cannabis parade) in Berlin in 1997 (Bündnis HANFPARADE e.V., n.d.)

The first legal step on the subject of cannabis relates to changes to the narcotics legislation in March 2017 and extends prescription options for medicinal cannabis (Cremer-Schaeffer & Knöß, 2019). This enables doctors to prescribe medicinal cannabis products such as flowers or extracts of pharmaceutical quality for patients (2019). At the time, the law was praised by all parties in the German Bundestag and passed unanimously (2019). The origins of the law date back to 2005 before its impact on the current medical landscape can be described (2019). Until 2005, court cases on cannabis were mainly dealt with for abuse and violations of the Narcotics Act (2019). Nevertheless, in 2005 the Federal Administrative Court ruled in favour of an MS patient who wanted to use cannabis for self-therapy and had filed a lawsuit (2019).

The first step in this coalition was taken in the 2021 coalition agreement (Bundesregierung, 2021). Here, the coalition parties ‘agreed to introduce a controlled supply of cannabis to adults for recreational purposes in licensed shops (2021). This is intended to control the quality, prevent the distribution of contaminated substances and ensure the protection of minors and the health of consumers in the best possible way (2021). An evaluation of the law's impact on society is to take place after four years (2021).

As one step towards the legislation, the government coalition has introduced a two-pillar model to support the cultivation and distribution of cannabis in Germany (Bundesregierung, 2022). Both pillars cover the commercial and private aspects (2022). While Pillar 1 allows non-profits to cultivate and distribute cannabis to members under strict regulations, Pillar 2 focuses on international law by re-evaluating the project every five years with a focus on youth protection (2022).

Almost a year later, some similarities can be recognised in the Federal Law Gazette (CanG, 2024). Thus, according to §2 para. 3, the consumption and possession of cannabis are exempt from punishment from the age of 18, but according to §19 para. 3 of the Federal Law Gazette, clubs may only distribute cannabis to people aged 21 (2024). Further, the Federal Ministry for Digital and Transport decided to scientifically review the THC limits for driving (2024). An interdisciplinary working group consisting of experts in medicine, law, and transport will be established to determine a possible legal THC limit (2024). Results were expected in spring 2024 (2024). The draft bill by the government coalition dated May 14, 2024, for a sixth amendment to the Road Traffic Act and other road traffic regulations includes the following addition to paragraph 1(Fraktion SPD, BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN Und FDP, 2024):

"(1a) A person acts unlawfully if they intentionally or negligently operate a motor vehicle in traffic while having 3.5 ng/ml or more of tetrahydrocannabinol in their blood serum."⁴ (2024)

2.2.2. Lessons from Other Countries

An in-depth comprehension of the implications and difficulties inherent in cannabis policy is essential to fully comprehending the global phenomenon of legalisation and regulation surrounding this substance. Although legal in some countries, cannabis remains illegal in the majority of the world (Červený et al., 2017). A significant number of heads of state and experts have advocated for its prohibition on the grounds of perceived health risks (2017). The European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD, 2020) found that approximately half of students across various countries reported easy access to cannabis. Despite maintaining the illegality of cannabis in 2019 and 2020, Germany achieved legalisation in 2024.

Another example is the Netherlands, which decriminalised cannabis in 1967, establishing the regulated sale of cannabis through coffee shops (Knottnerus et al., 2023). Nevertheless, concerns regarding illegal cannabis exports have prompted the implementation of policy adjustments, including the proposed introduction of a closed supply and production model (2023). The Dutch policy of separating markets has been identified as a contributing factor to the success of prevention efforts (Kemme et al., 2021).

In Western countries, the initiation of cannabis use often occurs in adolescence, with notable differences in initiation ages when compared to tobacco and alcohol (Gerits et al., 2002). In Germany, discussions have highlighted concerns that the legalisation of cannabis in coffee shops could be mitigated using legalisation arguments by the ruling parties (Bundestag, 2024a). The German Bundestag's 2019 report on drug policies in Amsterdam and San Francisco indicated that policy differences may not significantly impact consumption rates (Bundestag, 2019). Notably, Dutch drug policies have reduced the prevalence of hard drugs, although cannabis use remains slightly above the European average among young adults and adolescents (2019). In conclusion, it must be acknowledged that the notion that stricter drug policies reduce consumption is a complex and variable phenomenon that varies between countries (2019).

To summarise SQ1, cannabis legalisation has long been an issue in Germany and has taken its first steps towards legality through medicinal cannabis. Other countries have had a role in the debate but have not been significant forerunners. In the cannabis legislation of 2024, many aspects play a role, here now the basics of cultivation and consumption and road traffic were listed as subsequent points

⁴ Translated from German

3. Method

This paper employed a single case study design applying agenda-setting theory to cannabis legalisation in Germany, focusing on the influence of public opinion on Instagram. User actions on Instagram serve as the independent variable, influencing the agenda of cannabis legislation as the dependent variable.

Methodologically, the study involves:

Step 1: Collection, coding, and qualitative analysis of comments.

Step 2: Conducting semi-structured interviews, followed by coding and qualitative analysis.

The research utilizes a conceptual framework synthesized from literature, the theoretical perspectives of researchers, and expert knowledge (Choy, 2014). Document reviews and a comprehensive literature review were conducted to deepen understanding of Instagram's influence and enhance data collection and analysis (Onwujekwe et al., 2015). In-depth interviews with selected participants provide insights into individual perspectives on the relationship between public discourse and cannabis policy (Morris, 2015). Semi-structured interviews offer flexibility for research, accommodating both individual and group settings to encourage interaction and spontaneity (Kallio et al., 2016).

In the context of cannabis legalisation and Instagram, the concept of framing is employed primarily to facilitate the identification of potential correlations. This approach enables the comparison of similar elements within the coding process. As illustrated in Figure 1, these represent distinct and sequential phases in the research methodology, collectively contributing to the formulation of an answer to the research question.

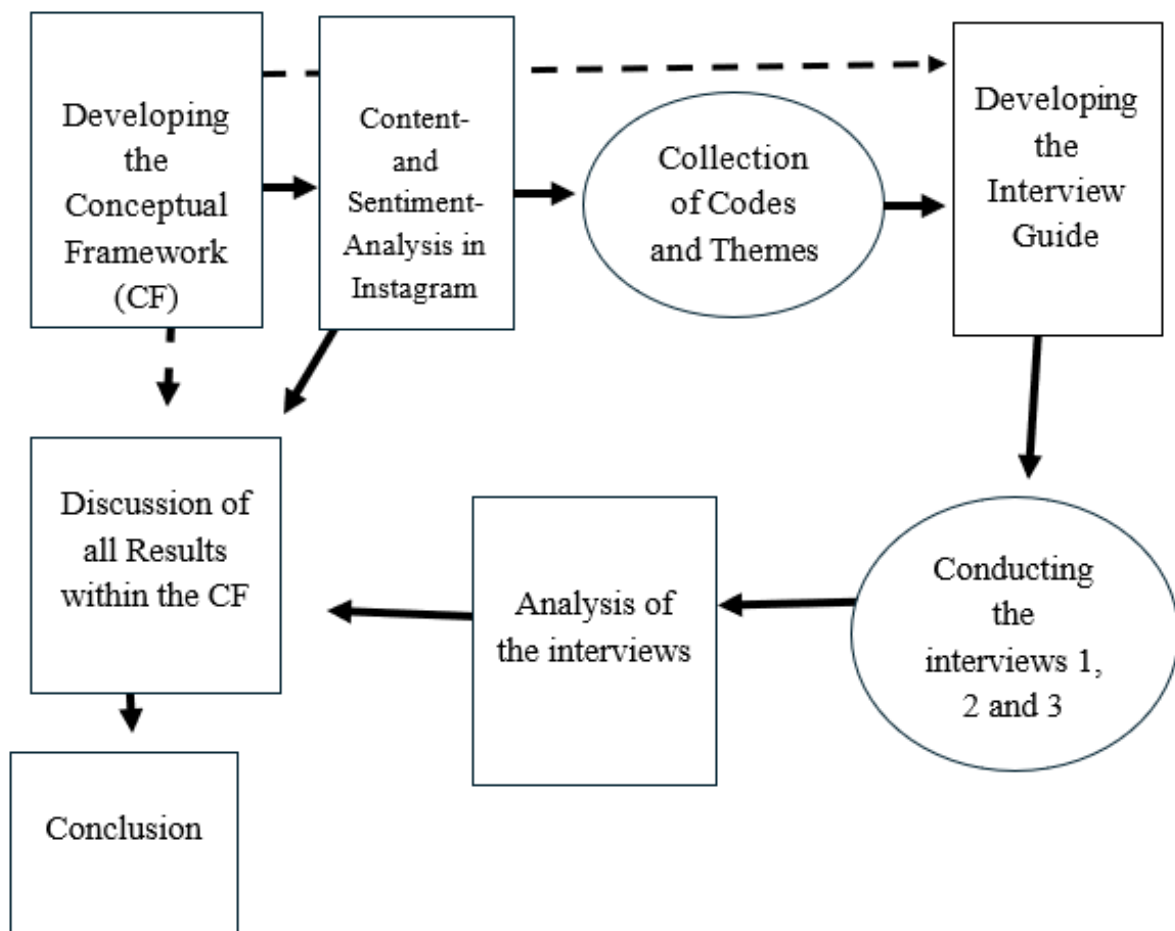


Figure 1 Progress and Structure of the research (Source: own illustration)

3.1. Instagram Comment Collection and Analysis

The investigation of frames involves analysing media coverage patterns to identify their influence on attitudes and topic interpretations (Wirth & Kühne, 2013). This study uses an effect-oriented framing approach to examine how messages impact attitudes. It explores framing on Instagram, focusing on how public perception and decision-making are influenced by user actions and shared information. A similar study used text and sentiment analysis tools to categorise the tone and context of these discussions in the context of medical cannabis (Khademi et al., 2023).

To understand and analyse the framing of cannabis legalisation, a total of eight posts in 2023 and 2024 were collected: two Instagram posts each from public broadcasting channels (Tagesschau and ZDF_heute) as neutral reporters, three from the Federal Ministry of Health as part of policymakers, one from the German government and finally one from the CDU as the largest opposition party and interview participant. As well, one was chosen for the SPD since two interview partners are members of the party. One criterion within the collection was the descriptions of posts being as neutral as possible, except for

the selection of posts on the topics of youth protection and road traffic, because these stand out and are the only topics explicitly addressed again by the Ministry of Health. They indicate how relevant these topics are for policymakers.

Under each post, up to 100 comments were collected, totalling around 700 comments, and organized in an Excel table. The Excel table consisted of ten sections where the comments were numbered from 1 to 100, the number of likes was recorded, and the content was noted. The author of the comment was not recorded in the table, but if relevant, such as if it was the post author or another relevant channel, it was noted in an additional comment section (the last section). For the analysis, coding was prepared in six other sections, with one section for the sentiment code and five additional sections for further codes. There were no inclusion or exclusion criteria for the comments under the selected posts to capture and analyse the full picture of the framing.

Since the posts refer to German policies in politics and were discussed on German accounts the comments were all German.

First, three code groups were formed for the analysis to categorise the comments. Firstly, the mood (negative, positive, neutral), type of language (insult, praise) and specific topics were analysed. In addition, the popularity was analysed based on the number of likes. Further, topic-specific breakdowns were analysed, such as the protection of minors. The analysis also included the categorisation of comments as not categorisable. Additionally, other codes categorised some comments as general statements or questions. The coding of sentiments and language also included the incorporation of emojis. In general, there were also keywords for some codes that were determined with the analysis, but a large part also consisted of a subjective analysis under observation of the context in the coding process. In conclusion, all codes and keywords must be considered in context, without context through further codes there is a risk of misinterpreting the simple use of code. Further, some of the comments contained insiders, which are not understandable for the researcher or others without prior knowledge.

All codes and related keywords within the coding scheme were translated from German for the following analysis and discussion, the frames for the discussion and interviews were then created based on the codes and various combinations based on the approach of identification of frames using content analysis which involves locating sections of a mediated text where an individual or group contextualises a topic (D'Angelo, P., 2017).

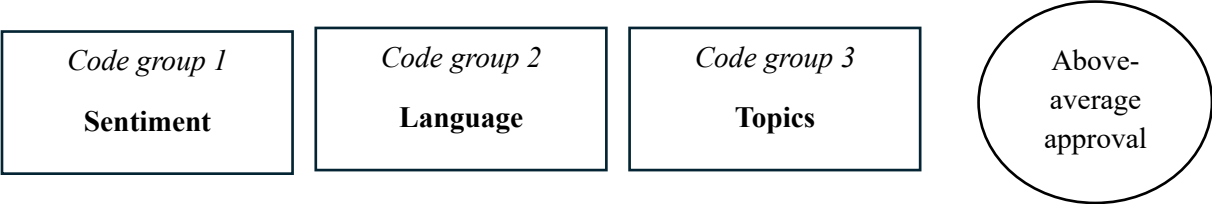


Figure 2 Principles in the selection and creation of codes for the comment analysis

3.1.1. Limitations

There are always problems in creating and observing user behaviour concerning frames, further research is lacking on how the connection between the two aspects works, including how frames and commensals interact to influence attitudes and behaviours (Leong, 2022). It should be noted that each post can only be a snapshot, as the date the post was retrieved is therefore highly relevant. There is always a dilemma with discussions on social media that a fragmentation of the audience takes place, especially with political interests, and therefore an imbalance of political information arises in society (Feezell, 2017). It is therefore important to keep in mind that the comments under a post only ever represent a very limited section of society and only politically active users.

3.2. Interviews

The interview guide is divided into three main sections: introduction, main section and conclusion. The introduction gives a brief overview of the politician's use of social media in political communication to contextualise the questions. The main section is divided into three blocks: Priming questions, Framing questions and Agenda-Setting questions, with a flexible flow. Finally, there is a brief review of the interview and an outlook on the use of the data. Each of these three blocks is based on the theoretical framework that was previously established. In addition, the results from the comment analysis were included in the preparation of the interview and the most striking topics were partially incorporated to maintain certain flexibility and to find out to what extent these frames influenced the agenda-setting without mentioning small, indirect anomalies, as the comments are primarily relevant for the discussion and not to lead the primary data from the interviews in the wrong direction by steering them.

A total of three interviews were conducted. Nevertheless, the first hurdles were recognised during the scheduling and implementation of the interviews. Collecting in-depth interview data is time- and resource-intensive. Quickly entering and flexibly reanalysing data maximises returns (Deterding & Waters, 2018). Originally, semi-structured online interviews were planned for all participants. Due to scheduling reasons and their willingness to participate, two interviews out of three had to answer the interview questions in writing, which introduced further limitations in the results that had to be considered for further research. Their answers were then sent back as PDFs. All interviews, spoken and written, were conducted in German. The interviews, both online and written, were conducted or answers were received between May 27, 2024, and June 19, 2024.

Interview-Partner	Interview-Information
Martina Stamm-Fibich	Party: SPD Votum: infavour
Nezahat Baradari	Party: SPD Votum: abstain
Simone Borchardt	Party: CDU Votum: against

Table 1 Introduction of the Interviewees

Interview Number	Realisation Type
Interview 1	Written
Interview 2	Online (Duration: 20min)
Interview 3	Written

Table 2 General information about the interviews

3.2.1. Analysing the Interviews

The present interview was documented in the form of an audio recording and subsequently transcribed. The transcribed statements were integrated into the existing Excel spreadsheet along with the other statements. All were divided into sections, with separate sections and rows for the corresponding question and question number. Additionally, there was a comment section to record any anomalies and details on how the interview was conducted. This allowed each answer to be categorised in the overall results during the analysis. In addition to the standard sections, there were two extra sections specifically for the online interview: one for the query and one for the response. Anomalies and relevant notes for the analysis were also entered in the comments section. These conspicuous features referred not only to the content but also to observations made during the interview.

For the analysis, four code groups were initially formed to categorise the politicians' statements. In contrast to the commentary analysis, this involves the subjective perception of topics and the discussion behaviour on Instagram and in the Health Committee.

Returning to the code groups, firstly, the perceived sentiment concerning cannabis legalisation (negative, positive, neutral), the type of language and the perceived topics were analysed. Two external codes (politicians, health committee) were used to further categorise and structure the statements. Also new to the coding scheme are the codes relating to the politician's work and agenda. In general, there were also keywords for some codes that were determined during the analysis, but a large part also consisted of a subjective analysis observing the context in the coding process. In conclusion, it is essential to consider all codes and keywords in context, as the interpretation of a code may be misguided in the absence of contextualisation. Additionally, some comments included within the data set are not readily comprehensible to the researcher or other parties lacking the requisite background knowledge.

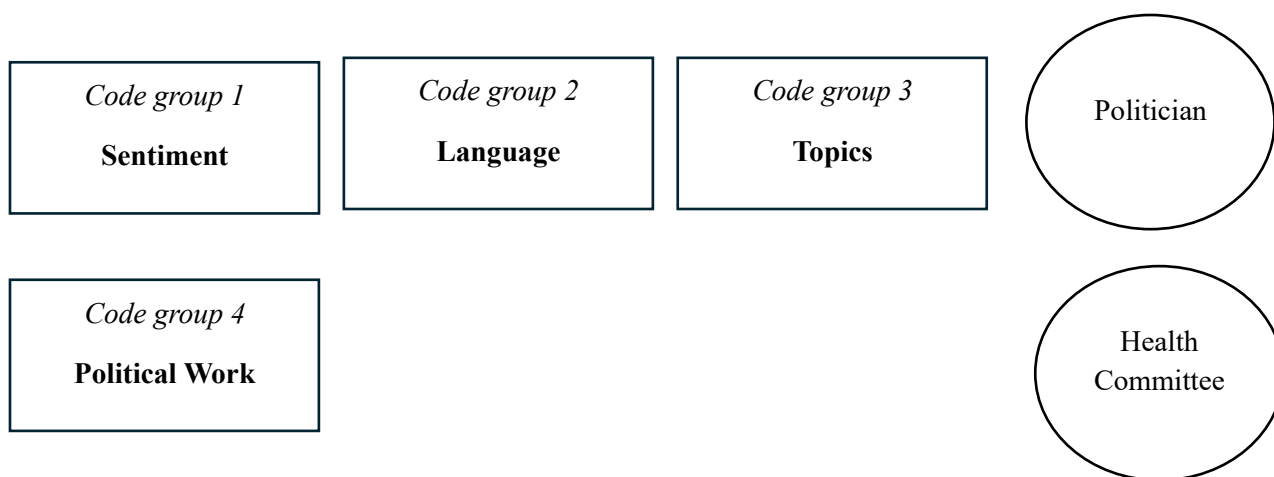


Figure 3 Principles in the selection and creation of codes in the analysis of the interviews

3.2.2. Limitations

To mitigate limitations in the interview guide, questions were kept concise and minimised to ensure effective coding during the analysis of interview responses (Campbell et al., 2013 as cited in Deterding & Waters, 2018). Further, in-depth interviews aim for "inherent flexibility" and engaging dialogue with participants (Simons, 2009). While this methodological advantage was fully utilised in the one online interview, other interviews required reliance on documentation of perspectives (Simons, 2009). Yet, obtaining diverse perspectives on public engagement on Instagram remained essential. Additionally, considering the interviewee's subjectivity is crucial. A politician's media presence, guided by their political person can vary depending on the topic (Loeb, 2017),. Personal and party identities are closely tied to projecting ideologies (Rodríguez, 2022), influencing responses and limiting generalisability. Interviewees were chosen based on their varied votes on cannabis legislation. Challenges also arise in generalising findings on how political actors, particularly parties, utilise the Internet (Ahmad, N. & Popa, I. 2014).

4. Analysis

First, all results section will refer to a qualitative analysis, which excludes the detailed analysis of individual codes and their combinations.

Before looking at the results of the interviews, it is important to take a look at how the legalisation of cannabis is portrayed by users on Instagram. To revise, "framing has been defined as the process of selecting 'some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described'" (Entman, 1993; Moy, et al., 2016, as cited in Lalancette & Raynauld, 2020, p. 262)

4.1. Instagram Comments

In the first step, the distribution of the codes is listed in Figure 4. These give a general overview of the results related to the public discussion on Instagram, but as each comment has been given several codes, they do not yet provide any results that can be analysed in terms of content. Relevant overlaps and relations in codes are described in a subsequent step.



Figure 4 Frequencies of code within the comment analysis (Source: own illustration)

A large number of comments could not be categorised under cannabis legalisation, attitudes towards policymakers or other related topics, as they are either fundamentally unclassifiable or are reflected in

a discussion in which they refer to previous comments in a discussion and/or attack or moderately criticise a participant in the discussion.

In this analysis, out of a total of eight posts, two posts related to youth protection and road traffic were selected. Although these posts had somewhat theme-oriented comment sections, most comments on youth protection were not categorisable. In terms of road traffic, the comments were about road safety, alcohol, and law enforcement, but they referred to alcohol rather than cannabis. General comments also dominated here, as well as non-categorisable ones. In summary, these two posts also had relatively few comments on average (under 100).

4.1.1. Context and Content of the Codes

Although not referring to a specific aspect of cannabis legalisation, it can be said from the figure that the sentiment in the comments was generally negative or neutral towards it. Most of these 'General Statement' codes originate from the commentary section of the German public broadcasters ZDF_heute and Tagesschau. Some users used humour to react to the legalisation, which tends to position them more positively towards it. On the other hand, most statements express strong opposition to legalisation, sometimes even leading to insults directed at politicians or cannabis users. Insults are also commonplace in the discussions in the comment section under each of the eight posts. The two opinions regularly attack each other with a harsh choice of words, but many refer directly to Karl Lauterbach, the German Health Minister, insulting him or wishing him dead. In some examples, the process and/or the law are equated with government incompetence. In some cases, it is also accused of deliberately wanting to harm its own population. Further, in a relatively small portion of the analysed comments, it is criticised that cannabis legalisation enjoys an unnecessarily high priority in politics, despite other topics being more important. More can be observed if you look at the single channels in more detail.

But even in this commentary section, the two main topics and aspects have already been emphasised. “Protection of Minors” and “Health” were both highly relevant in the discussion. These two codes have very often appeared together but in different contexts. On the one hand, the protection of minors was emphasised as a positive aspect, but sometimes the complete opposite was argued. In some cases, some commentators saw both aspects and expressed objective criticism without completely degrading the law. Together with the “Protection of Minors” and “Health”, “Alcohol” was also dominantly criticised as an established drug, especially in the commentary section of the CDU, which was even accused of glorifying alcohol and even of having an alcohol ideology. In other commentary sections, a lot of reference was made to the alcohol lobby, which many in Germany believe to be dominant. To some extent, this argument also applies to tobacco.

Concerning the “Protection of Minors” and “Health”, two aspects are particularly highlighted in a positive light. These are preventive work, age verification during procurement, and quality assurance of the product, as consumers no longer have to obtain impure cannabis from the black market. On the other

hand, opponents argue that legalisation makes cannabis even more accessible. Frequently this argument in the Ministry of Health's contributions to the protection of minors can be found, but also in all other comment sections.

On the subject of driving, there is still a great deal of uncertainty under the post of the Federal Ministry of Health concerning limit values, how to deal with traffic offences in which the person concerned was above the limit values and criminal prosecution under the new limit values. Additionally, the issue of alcohol plays a role. Again and again, comparisons are made as to the extent to which the limits are comparable, and it is discussed which drug is more devastating. Many people in the field of road safety consider the limit of 3.5 ng/ml to be too low and call for a limit of up to 10 ng/ml in the blood, as cannabis can be detected in the blood longer than its effects last.

At least, within the Codes of “Road Safety” and “Jurisdiction/Criminal Prosecution,” a neutral stance is generally taken towards legalisation, except a few, especially with a negative sentiment, who argue that the legalisation puts road safety in Germany in danger.

Since not every code relationship has been explained in detail here, but only the most important ones, Figures 5a-c represent all the prominent codes, starting from Code Group 1 (sentiments) and then the subordinate Code Groups 2 (language) and 3 (topic).

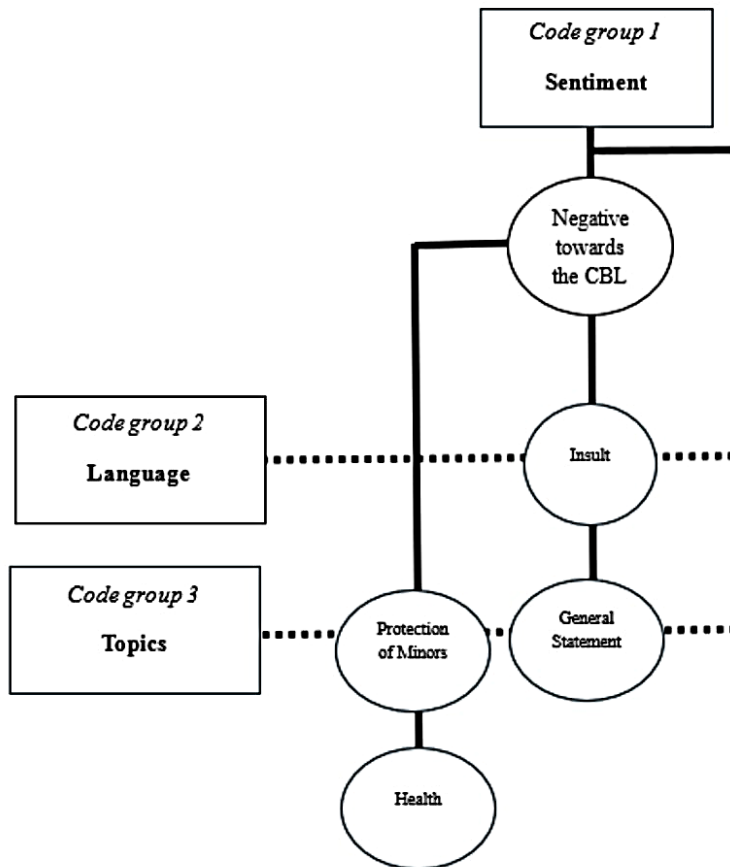


Figure 5a

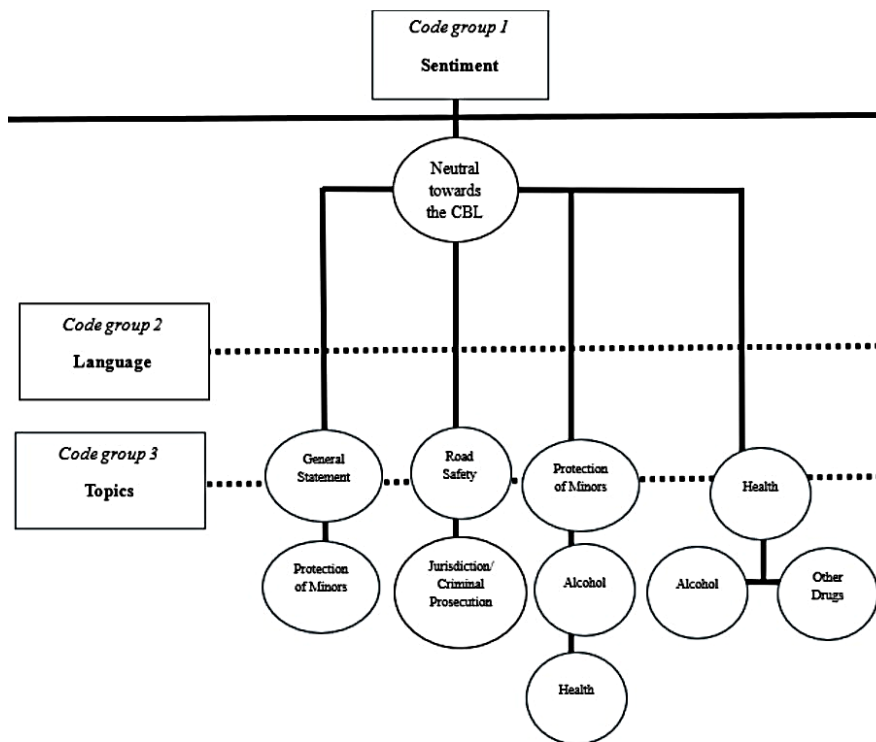


Figure 5b

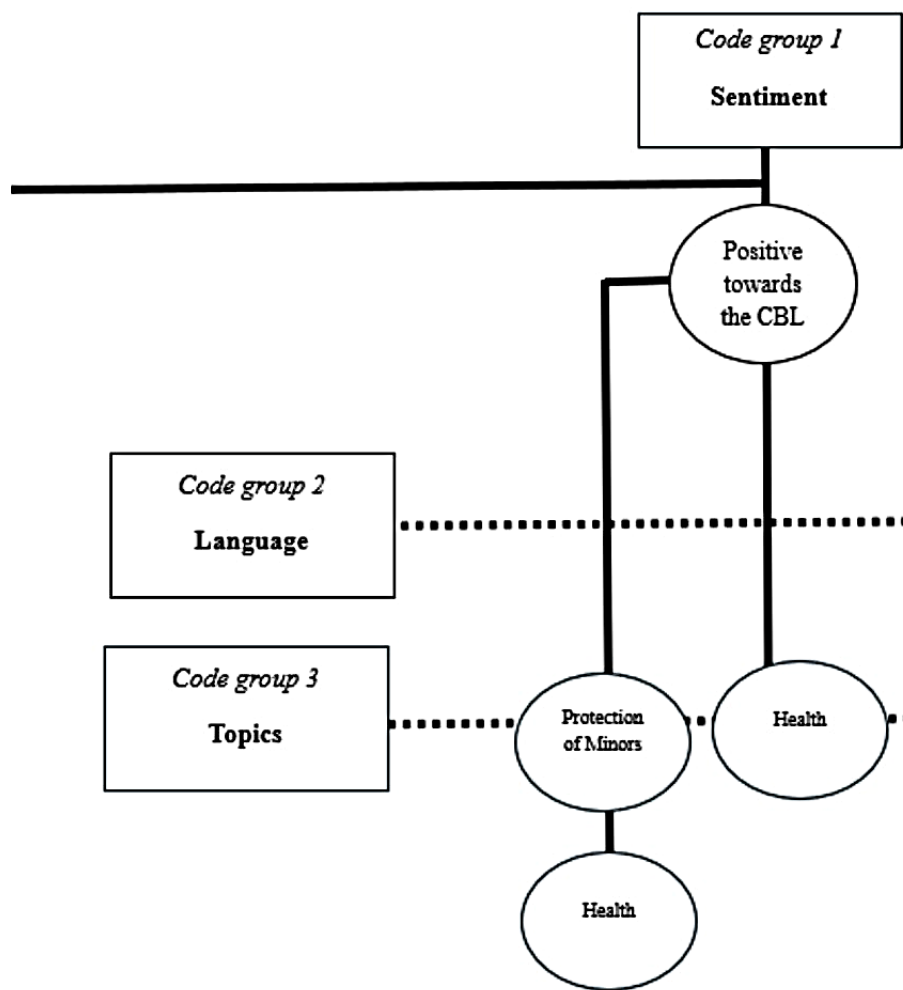


Figure 5c

Figure 5a -c Collection of results from significant, related codes (Source: own illustration)

What is noticeable is that there is very little active praise for legalisation overall. Even in the SPD's comment section, there is only limited enthusiastic support, although the tendency is somewhat more positive than in other comment sections. Yet, it is not significant. Further, comparisons with other countries are very rarely made, and when they are, it's mostly with the Netherlands as a negative example or with the USA, Canada, or Portugal as general examples. Independently, medical cannabis, which is already legal in Germany, also plays a small role. Users who refer to medical cannabis tend to have a negative view of legalisation for recreational use since those who need it already have legal access. Regarding SQ2 on how the experiences of other countries with the legalisation of cannabis have influenced the debate on Instagram, this can largely be answered in Figures 4 to 5a-c. The code "Other countries" was rarely used in the comments, and this aspect was not recognized in all interviews. Therefore, it can be said that it did not influence the debate. Now, the question remains whether this is reflected in the results of the interviews, which could speak to a potential effect on the agenda or lack thereof. It can be said that topics such as the protection of minors, road safety and general statements, without including other countries, dominate the discussion on Instagram.

4.2. Interview Results

In Figure 6 we see a brief representation of the frequencies of the codes in the interviews. As the interviews are not so extensive, the details are described afterwards to get a feel for the results without going into detail.

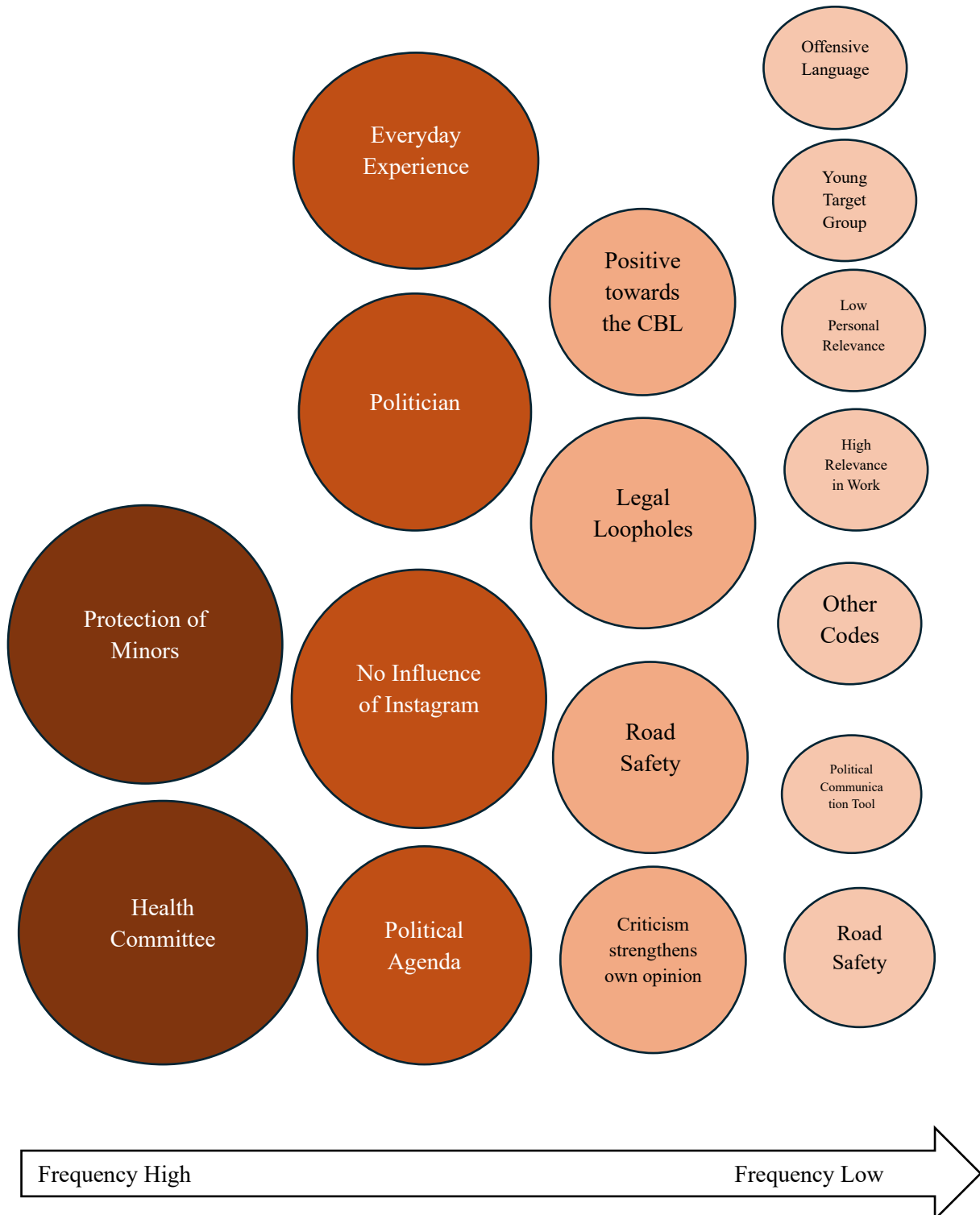


Figure 6 Frequency of the Codes in The Interviews (Source: own illustration)

All in all, we see many small subtopics in Figure 6 that now need to be contextualised in further sections. The interviews are labelled 1, 2 and 3 in the further presentation of the results.

In the first step, we look at the results of the two most frequently used codes “Health Committee” and “Protection of Minors”. There was an overlap here. Although this cannot be attributed to the frequency of the codes, all interviews revealed that the protection of minors was a dominant topic in the debate in the Health Committee. This frequency of the “Protection of Minors” can be explained above all by the personal and political relevance of the two interviewees (1 and 2). This observation can be attributed above all to the questions that addressed the individual priorities of the politicians through the discussion about the German Cannabis Legalisation and their similar perception of the protection of minors as one of the leading topics of discussion on Instagram. In interview 3, this topic was also recognised, but in general, it was not related to their own priorities.

Looking at the “Road Safety “ code, one observation could be made from the context of the interviews. Interviews 1 and 2 showed that, concerning the Health Committee, road safety was not an issue at all at the beginning due to the allocations of responsibility in the Bundestag, but in the end, it became more and more of an issue. In the end, this topic was in interviews 1 and 2 only a side issue in the Health Committee and was not a main topic like the protection of minors, which was also reflected in the politicians' agenda. Interview 3, on the other hand, also identified Instagram as an important topic, but referred to the general discussion in the public debate in politics that there are simply topics that need to be discussed independently of external influences.

Even if we now devote one column further to the other four codes, we can also find overlaps between the codes there, which mainly relate to the relationships between politicians, the Health Committee and Instagram. In the cases of interviews 1,2 and 3, it was stated that Instagram had no or only marginal influence on the political agenda for the legalisation of cannabis by the politicians and the Health Committee. It is important to mention here that both interviewees rated the use and relevance of Instagram for political work as high, even if this is not visible in Figure 6.

Rather, in interviews 1 and 2 an influence of everyday experiences and, to a greater extent, professional experiences from the German healthcare system were observed. The interviewees stated that these had a dominant influence on the arguments and setting of the individual agenda, which were taken into consideration in the discussion on cannabis legalisation in the Health Committee. An event that was not observed at all in interview 3.

The final two sections represent the topics that have been identified on Instagram, which collectively convey several overarching impressions.

When asked about the sentiment on Instagram concerning cannabis legalisation, there is a commonality in the statements made in the interviews regarding the dominant supporters of legalisation as it can be

observed in Figure 6, since the code “Positive”, which refers to how the politician perceived the sentiment towards the Cannabis Legalisation. Further, in interviews 1 and 2 was observed that those supporters lay on offensive language, unobjective communication and argumentation, which included insults towards critics (users and politicians). In Interview 2 a fundamentally positive sentiment towards cannabis legalisation was also identified, which can be, according to her, traced to the predominantly young audience on Instagram. In general, it can be said from both interviews that Instagram tends to be assigned to a young user group and that Instagram is used here as a means of communication to access precisely this target group. Instagram is also used to get a picture of the events and sentiment towards cannabis legalisation from precisely this user group. In interview 3, a positive mood was also noted, but here the users were open-minded and interested instead of aggressive.

Despite similar usage, interviews 1, 2 and 3 did not reveal entirely identical perceptions of the sentiment and topics. The different results obtained by presenting the relationships between the codes are now presented in the relations chart in Figure 7.

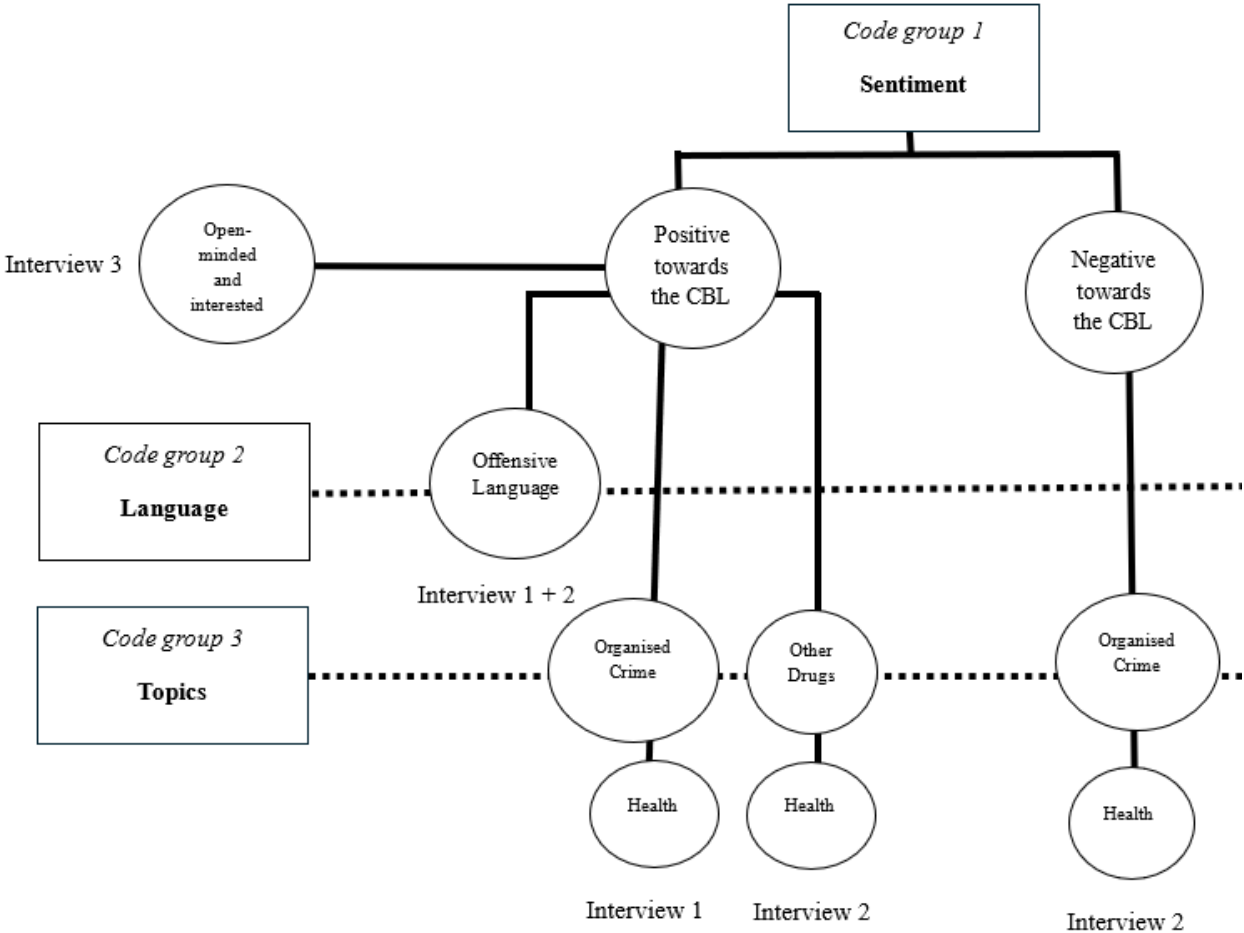


Figure 7 Collection of perceived, related topics and sentiments on Instagram from the interview partners (Source: own illustration)

Regarding the topic, firstly, the existing criminalisation of the drug, which simultaneously poses health risks due to contaminated cannabis from the black market, was discussed. According to subjective perceptions in Interview 2, a stronger comparison with other established legal drugs like alcohol and tobacco was noted, which cannabis advocates believe are much worse for health. Based on their observations, proponents of cannabis in the same context portray legalisation as unnecessary. Conversely, critics of legalisation on Instagram emphasize issues such as youth protection and organised crime, which are also gaining momentum in the discussion.

In summary and regarding SQ3, respondents consistently experienced positive moods, although perceptions regarding attitude and language differed, particularly in Interview 3. In handling the interviews, there was a dominant tendency towards solidifying opinions and adjusting media agendas.

4.2.1 Response Variability and Analysis Limits

Due to the different ways in which the interviews were conducted, a fundamental difference can be recognised in the structure and length of the answers. While the answers given in writing were kept very short, those given verbally were much longer and more focused on specific topics, which also led to limitations in the analysis. Further, due to the lack of direct interaction, possible reasons for the short answers could not be scrutinised again.

Concerning the online interview, it can be recognised that many aspects were repeated despite the flexible design and thematic separation of the questions into blocks. From the subjective observation of the interviewer, the assumption arises that this is due to the one-sided nature of the use of Instagram and therefore many aspects coincide.

The next observation relates to the perception of the marginal influence of Instagram on the Health Committee. In interview 2, it was emphasised that this is a subjective perception, which is in line with the other statements. Nevertheless, a broader interview would have been necessary here, which was not possible for many reasons, such as the politicians' lack of willingness or time capacities.

4.3. Discussion

The discussion focuses on the comparison of the frames. Tables 3a-c and 4 provide a framework for this by summarising the results of the comment analysis and the interviews and embedding the results in the framing concept of Sniderman and Theriault (2004). The central frames were defined based on the reactions to the legalisation of cannabis in Germany, with codes and main arguments being combined into coherent frames. Sniderman and Theriault (2004) define frames as how public perceptions of issues are shaped based on how they are presented.

The summary of comments is presented first.

Table 3a

Code group 1: Sentiment	Negative	Positive	Neutral	Positive
Code group 2: Language	X	X	X	X
Code group 3: Topics	Protection of Minors	Protection of Minors	General Statement	Health
	Health	Health	Protection of Minors	X
Main-Argument	Critics see the CBL as a threat to humanity, as they argue that it will make cannabis easier to obtain.	Advocates see the state regulations as a higher hurdle for the sale of cannabis to young people, especially through the age controls now, which were probably not made in illegal sales.	Critics see advantages and disadvantages to the CBL, but one point of criticism is the access to cannabis for minors by their parents and the passing on of cannabis by adults.	Some users frame CBL as something positive for health, as it enables and simplifies more prevention work. In addition, the state regulations introduce a higher quality standard, which in turn has a positive effect on health.
Frame-Number	1	2	3	4
Frame	Negative health Impact on minors	Prevention through age controls	Criticism towards Legal Loopholes	Positive Health Effects Through Prevention and Higher Standards of Quality

Table 3b

Code group 1	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Negative
Code group 2	X	X	X	Insult
Code group 3	Road Safety	Health	Health	General Statement
	Jurisdiction/Criminal Prosecution	Alcohol	Other Drugs	X
	X	Other Drugs	Alcohol	X
Main-Argument	There was still great uncertainty and discussion among the users about the blood limits allowed for driving, which can affect law enforcement and the loss of a driver's license. Above all, the government's limit is seen as too low.	Critics draw comparisons with other drugs, without saying that CBL is good; however, it should be in a fair proportion to other drugs like alcohol and tobacco.	A large group of users frame alcohol as a massive problem in German society in the discussion about CBL.	Verbal attacks and insults, including death wishes for policymakers who campaigned in favour of the CBL, with health minister Karl Lauterbach, in particular, being a victim of the aggressive tone.

Frame-Number	5	6	7	8
Frame	Negative health Impact on minors	Harm through Alcohol	Comparison: Drug Legality - Why are other drugs allowed?	Strongly negative framing of the law and policymakers

Table 3a-b Frames perceived through the analysed comments (Source: own illustration)

In Table 4, the perceived frames of the interviewed politicians are shown for comparison.

Table 4	Interview 1 + 2	Interview 1	Interview 2	Interview 2	Interview 3
Code group 1: Sentiment	Positive	Positive	Negative	Positive	Positive + open-minded and interested
Code group 2: Language	Offensive Language	X	X	X	X
Code group 3: Topics	X	Organised Crime	Organised Crime	Other Drugs	X
	X	Health	Protection of Minors	Health	X
Main-Argument	The politicians from 1 and 2 have perceived an unobjective communication, sometimes even aggressive sentiment towards those who were not in favour of the positive sentiment.	The 1 politician has largely framed the positive associations with the CBL among supporters as a fight against the black market, while at the same time better regulating the quality of the cannabis available and thus reducing the health damage caused by contaminated cannabis from the black market.	The politician from 2 has dominated among the opponents' issues such as a strengthening of the black market through the CBL, which then has negative consequences for minors.	The politician from 2 has dominated among supporters the comparison with other legal drugs such as cannabis and alcohol as arguments in favour of legalisation.	The politician of interview 3 perceived that the users on Instagram are interested and openly positive towards the CBL.
Frame-Number	9	10	11	12	13
Frame	Offensive, aggressive dominance by	CBL reduces damage to health by	CBL will strengthen the black market	Cannabis advocates justify legalisation	Interested, openly positive users

supporters of the CBL	curbing the black market	and harm minors	with legal, more health- harmful drugs	towards the CBL
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4.3.1. Contrasting Interviews and Comment Analysis

Using agenda-setting theory and the framing concept, one can quickly get the impression that impressions on a topic are very homogeneous, as McCombs (2013) assumes that agenda-setting in the media emphasises certain topic features, but this is not entirely comprehensible when comparing the perceived aspects of the respective analyses, as these emphasised features not only vary from commentary analysis to interview responses but also vary among the interviews. This also includes the fact that the number of frames is already different. There are almost twice as many frames in the results of the comment analysis as in the interviews. In addition, the frames obtained from Instagram are more detailed and argument-related, which is the reason why, as will be identified below, some of the comment frames are included there in the broadest sense. In addition, while the protection of minors was identified as a dominant theme on Instagram, it was rarely included in the explicit aspects of the discussion. This makes it difficult to find concrete overlaps between the interviews and the comments. Nonetheless, the most relevant aspects of the comparison are outlined below. The protection of minors is more suitably addressed in the latter part of the discussion. This is done by examining how Instagram usage influenced the public discourse and political agendas regarding cannabis legalisation.

When we compare Frames 2, and 4 with the answers from interviews 1 and 2, those frames were perceived. The politicians perceived these two frames in their approach, even though they are not completely identical in content. Nevertheless, there are partial overlaps with Frame 10. These overlaps primarily relate to aspects such as the increased quality of sold cannabis through state controls, with the reason being the suppression of the black market, which was perceived as more dominant by politicians than explicitly mentioned in the comment analysis. It is assumed that this can be attributed to a priming effect, where the interviewees automatically associate the reduction of impure cannabis with the suppression of the black market due to their prior knowledge.

Due to the perception of a predominantly positive sentiment towards legalisation, it is noticeable that the negative frames, especially Frame 1, are not reflected in the interview responses. This affects not only the perception of the topics but also the perception of the language used by the users. Even though this does not directly pertain to specific thematic aspects, this discrepancy becomes noticeable when comparing Frame 8 from the comment analysis with Frame 9 from the interview results. In the comments, a massively aggressive sentiment towards the health minister who argues for cannabis legalisation as his project is evident. This perception contrasts with the dominance of the perceptions in interviews 1 and 2, where aggressive and unobjective language against critics of legalisation was noted.

Besides the mentioned aspects, there were thematic discrepancies between the results of the comment analysis and the interview results, as shown in Tables 3a - b and 4. In Interview 1, other legal drugs and other drugs in general did not play a significant role, while Interview 2 showed a clear awareness of this issue. Here, the observations from the comment analysis, which relate to the behaviour of users under posts on certain channels, can be incorporated, which led to the observation that opposition posts often attract stronger criticism of alcohol and other drugs compared to other posts, likely due to varying user behaviour across different channels (Ksiazek et al. 20216). The dominant positive and open mood of interview 3 can also be assigned to this point, as this stands out and can also depend on the choice of channels. After all, this suggests that the specific Instagram channels we engage with can significantly influence the perception of dominant sentiments.

Further, Frames 3 and 5 are exceptions in the comparison of results, as Frame 3 covers a very broad and general topic area that was only marginally addressed in the interviews. Frame 5, on the other hand, was a topic that was perceived by all interviews, although initially, it did not have the relevance it had towards the end according to interview 2. Further, in interviews 1 and 2 it was stated that the discussion only developed later and that we had previously observed a lack of clarity regarding the limit values in the comments. It is doubtful whether the government's readjustment is the result of this, as it has reserved the right to decide on the limit values again (CanG, 2024). It could not be found in statements on Instagram either, and if one assumes that there was an influence, this can be quickly refuted, as the limit value decided on differs from that in the discussions. Many users demand a zero value, others demand a much higher value of 10ng/ml in the blood. This does not result in any adjustment to the agenda of the cannabis legalisation which contains a value of 3.5 ng/ml.

Another notable point is the absence of any mention of other countries in the interviews. This lack of reference isn't surprising given the limited number of comments. In the presentation about lessons learned, the Netherlands emerges as a negative and positive example in politics, particularly concerning the dominant issue of the black market, which has drawn significant attention from politicians.

All these observations related to topics and language can be partly attributed to the subjective perceptions of researchers and politicians, limiting language interpretation comprehensibility and influencing audiences' news interpretations without their awareness, significantly impacting emerging or less important issues (Moy, et al., 2016).

To sum up, even though all the frames were compared, a key aspect of the discussion and the further course of answering the research question is that none of the politicians attributed significant relevance to Instagram for their agenda and opinion shaping. This partially contradicts the assumptions of Bulkow & Schweiger (2013), which suggest that public opinion and political agendas are interconnected. The word 'partially' is deliberately chosen here, as this paper only refers to public opinion on Instagram and does not consider other media. Additionally, the users on Instagram form such a diverse group with differing opinions that it is difficult to clearly and distinctly identify a single public opinion that

dominates the public discourse. In addition, according to Weaver (2007), factors such as subjective relevance in perception play a role in recognising certain aspects as more or less relevant, and since a dominant devotion to the topic of protection of minors in interviews 1 and 2 was observed, this partial fading out of other topics and frames can be explained. Considering additional statements from the interviews, especially Interview 2, it can be said that they use the comments to get an impression of the framing of the topic on Instagram, without explicitly labelling it as framing. In other words, they use the comments to gauge the general sentiment, as implemented indirectly by Leong (2022).

4.3.2. Political Agendas and Protection of Minors: Insights from Interviews

As demonstrated by Van Der Meer & Verhoeven (2013), the interviews revealed that politicians brought their professional experience to the discussion, influencing priorities like the inadequate hospital system. Comments reflect a clear tendency towards topics on the political agenda, highlighting that both political institutions and interest groups can have agendas (Walker, 1977, as cited in Erbring et al., 1980). Yet, this user agenda only partially aligns with the political agenda. As noted in Interview 3, laws must be broadly based and consider many aspects. This is evident in the federal government's two-pillar model, showing that agendas and media issues stem from real-world experiences.

Moreover, interviews 1 and 2 correspond to Feezel's (2017) assumptions that social media platforms serve not only as information sources but also as exchange platforms. The observed behaviour during interviews 1 and 2 can be summarised as follows:

1. Instagram as a Communication Tool
2. Expressing one's point of view

This aspect is related to the distinctive character of Instagram, which is consistent with the results of Cavazos-Rehg et al. (2016), who stated the overlap between cannabis users and predominantly young Instagram users. This is evident in politicians' use of Instagram concerning cannabis, which is to educate young people about their political position towards German cannabis Legalisation by referring to the effects of drugs. Aalberg, et al. (2011) argued that political actors strategically construct online presences for campaigning, which was particularly evident in interviews 1 and 2, which can explain why the protection of minors was so significant during the interviews even if it was not mentioned within the frames of Table 4. It concerned their political agenda and not their perceived public frames.

This aspect is related to the specific nature of Instagram, which is consistent with the findings of Cavazos-Rehg et al. (2016), who found an overlap between cannabis users and predominantly young Instagram users. This is also evident in the use of Instagram by politicians concerning cannabis, who educate young people about their political position on the legalisation of cannabis in Germany by highlighting the effects of the drug. Aalberg et al. (2011) argued that political actors strategically build online presences for campaigns, which was particularly evident in interviews 1 and 2, which may explain

why youth protection was so important during the interviews, even though it was not mentioned in the context of Table 4. It was about their political agenda and not their perceived public frame.

To sum up, although politicians did not explicitly confirm the influence of Instagram on their political agenda concerning the legislative discussions in the Health Committee, the interviews indirectly indicated a targeting of specific audiences. This is consistent with Bulkow, 's & Schweiger's (2013) view that political agendas are externally influenced. Weaver (2007) argued that agenda setting involves assessing the relevance of the issue, which in the case of cannabis legalisation on Instagram appeals primarily to youth.

4.3.3. Limitations

There is still the question of how this relates to the cannabis legalisation agenda. To this end, the limitations must be addressed once again, especially those relating to the Health Committee, which serves to prepare debates for decisions in the Bundestag and is not a decision-making body (Bundestag 2024b). As a result, the interviews only provide insight into the debates preparing for the decision and not into the concrete decision-making process, and how government bodies like the Ministry of Health use Instagram to make decisions in such processes.

Further limitations affect the subjectivity of the researcher. In this case, there is a limitation in the perception and interpretation of the results that we have from the process of analysis to the discussion. As already mentioned in the method, the coding and its interpretation are subjective, which can affect the reproducibility of the results. This applies to the selection of contributions, the codes used and the interpretation of correlations. An attempt was made to make all of this easier to understand by presenting the individual steps openly and making the work itself comprehensible. In addition, only three interviews with different votes were conducted to achieve a higher level of validity despite the low capacity of this research.

In terms of the subjectivity of the interviewees, the limitation is that the results may not be representative of the entire health committee, and as mentioned in Interview 2, perceptions of the influence of Instagram can vary. The fact that none of the three interviews mentioned a significant influence somewhat mitigates the overall statement. Nevertheless, it is important to consider this point as a potential limitation.

5. Conclusion

This paper aimed to explore the influence of Instagram on public engagement and policy formulation regarding cannabis legalisation in Germany. By analysing comments on Instagram posts and conducting interviews with policymakers, this research provides a brief understanding of the interplay between Instagram and the debate on the legal agenda of German Cannabis legalisation.

The consideration of sub-questions 1 to 3 served to successively approach the answer to the main question. In summary, it can be said that the legalisation of cannabis in Germany has been an issue in German politics and among the population for some time. The quasi-first step before legalisation for recreational use was taken with the introduction of medicinal cannabis. Furthermore, experience has been gathered from other countries where cannabis has already been legalised. However, these countries did not play a major role in the discussion about cannabis, as asked in SQ2. Instead, the topics of safe road traffic and youth protection were observed in the comment analysis. This brings us to SQ3, which, when applied to the interviews, revealed that the perceived topics were perceived by politicians as the main topic of public discussion on Instagram, together with a predominantly positive sentiment for cannabis legalisation. The interviews revealed that this was not a fully shared position.

To sum up, politicians use Instagram as a means to connect with younger demographics and gauge public sentiment which is an action resulting from their prior knowledge (Bermeitinger, 2015). Therefore, respondents adapted their media agenda to be more critical and confrontational, which is consistent with the findings of Moy et al. (2016) on politicians constructing frames. This result is in line with that of Gilardi et al. (2021), who were able to demonstrate a convergence between the political and social media agenda and public opinion. This challenges the assumption that politicians merely adhere to public framing (Sevenans, 2021; Strömbäck, 2008, cited in Matthes, 2011). Although the public discussion on Instagram influenced politicians' agendas, it did not influence the debates conducted by the Health Committee on the legalisation of cannabis. In conclusion, there is no direct influence of the public discussion on Instagram on policymaking. Instagram has only an influence on the platform-bonded media agenda by guiding the focus of politicians on certain topics like the protection of minors and health.

Moreover, this paper provides insights into the political relevance and use of Instagram, thereby supporting the arguments of Sormanen et al. (2022), suggesting that social media platforms serve as communication tools. Moreover, this paper has shown regarding the subjectivity of perceived frames that comments on social media alone are not the most reliable data source for consistent topic frames, as carefully assumed by Leong (2022), since perceived frames can vary significantly depending on the data source.

In the end, the gap mentioned by Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan (2012) is filled for the selected cases and insights into cannabis policies, but not for the general research gap regarding the relation between social media and policy processes. As noted in the limitations, it is necessary to conduct more interviews and additional supporting research on the relationship between social media, particularly Instagram, and politics. This would help to bridge the knowledge gap in this increasingly important topic.

In case studies, it is usually assumed that there is no generality, but Flyvbjerg (2006) argues against this assumption, which can also be applied to this work to a limited extent, as we find a consistent assessment of Instagram's influence in all opinions in the results. However, it should be noted that Instagram and

cannabis legalisation are two limited cases, as are the three politicians interviewed. Depending on the platform and policy or interviewee, the conclusion could be different.

Future research should continue to explore the evolving relationship between social media and policymaking, considering the dynamic nature of digital platforms and their impact on public discourse. Additionally, expanding the scope to include comparative studies across different countries and policy issues could provide a broader understanding of the mechanisms and outcomes of social media influence on public policy.

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Appendix A: Instagram Posts

Content Creator	Date of Publication	Date of Receipt	Content ⁵
Bundesgesundheitsministerium.	12 April 2024	05. May 2024	The Cannabis Act is in force. What rules apply to road traffic in this context? Federal Minister of Health @karl_lauterbach_mdb answers!
Bundesgesundheitsministerium.	05. April 2024	05. May 2024	And what happens if adults now pass cannabis on to children and young people? It remains a criminal offence and will be prosecuted accordingly by the criminal prosecution authorities. You can find more important information on cannabis legalisation and the protection of children and young people via the link in the bio in our FAQs.
Bundesgesundheitsministerium.	11 November 2023	05. May 2024	Cannabis use harbours a number of risks - including addiction.
Bundesregierung.	16 August 2023	05. May 2024	Cannabis becomes legal: adults will be able to grow up to three plants and possess up to 25 grams. Why is this becoming law? So that the illegal market no longer has a chance and children and young people are better protected - in favour of responsible use of cannabis
cdu	21. February 2024	05. May 2024	Why the legalisation of #cannabis is dangerous. Swipe to the end!
spdde and karl_lauterbach_mdb	23. February 2024	05. May 2024	Legal, regulated cannabis use  And now on with social policy for you 🙌 #CanG
tagesschau	23. February 2024	05. May 2024	The Bundestag has decided on the controlled release of cannabis in Germany.
zdfheute	17 November 2023	05. May 2024	Cannabis legalisation - yes. But not at the turn of the year as previously planned. This was confirmed by Federal Health Minister Karl Lauterbach (SPD). The debate on the content has been concluded, "even if it doesn't come into force on 1 January", the SPD politician told the "Tagesspiegel" newspaper.

⁵ Translated from German

URL:

- 1) Bundesgesundheitsministerium. (2024, April 12) from https://www.instagram.com/reel/C5qR-JWsUyf/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link
- 2) Bundesgesundheitsministerium. (2024, April 5) from https://www.instagram.com/reel/C5X702UsSkg/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFiZA==
- 3) Bundesgesundheitsministerium. (2023, November 11), from https://www.instagram.com/p/Cz4IuLRt3fp/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link
- 4) Bundesregierung. (2023, August 16) from https://www.instagram.com/p/CwAcl3NNEB1/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igshid=MzRlODBiNWFiZA==
- 5) cdu (21.Feb. 2024), from https://www.instagram.com/p/C3nmTQ7o6G2/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link
- 6) spdde und karl_lauterbach_mdb (2024 February 23). from https://www.instagram.com/reel/C3sZ96XtQ9j/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link
- 7) Tagesschau (2024 February 23) from https://www.instagram.com/p/C3saLuftx8c/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link
- 8) zdfheute (2023 November 17) from https://www.instagram.com/p/CzwSE1jNjGf/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

Appendix B: Coding Scheme

Interview-Content Codes

Code	Definition	Keywords/Example(s) ⁶
Politician	The code categorises content assigned to one of the interviewed politicians.	Keywords: all self-centred - my agenda, my..., from my point of view, subjective observation, Regardless of the Health Committee Example: <i>"Instagram now had no to marginal influence on the prioritisation and reasoning of [Name of Politician] [...]"</i>
Health Committee	The code categorises content assigned to the Health Committee	Keywords: Health Committee Example: <i>"[...] the main topics have been reflected in the Health Committee. [...]"</i>

⁶ Translated from German

Code group 1: Sentiment		
Negative towards the CBL	The interview partner observed a negative mood towards the legislation in the public discussion on Instagram.	
Positive towards the CBL	The interview partner observed a positive mood towards the legislation in the public discussion on Instagram.	<p>Keywords: proponents of cannabis, cannabis lobbyists, positive mood, advocate, support</p> <p>Example: <i>“Very much so, in my opinion, as cannabis advocates have dominated the public discourse on Instagram have dominated”</i></p>
open position	A statement that could be observed in the context of Instagram an open attitude of the users.	<p>Keywords: Open-minded, interested</p> <p>Example: <i>“Open-minded and interested in the topic”</i></p>
Code group 2: Language		
Offensive Language	The interview partner observed an offensive language towards the legislation or the politicians in the public discussion on Instagram.	<p>Keywords: Use of unobjective, aggressive language towards anyone</p> <p>Example: <i>“Sometimes very emphatically and sometimes aggressively by cannabis advocates and cannabis lobbyists.”</i></p>
Code group 3: Topics		
Protection of Minors	The interview partner observed the topic of the protection of minors within the legislation in the public discussion on Instagram.	<p>Keywords: Protection of Minors</p> <p>Example: <i>“Regardless of the Health Committee, the protection of minors has always dominated the discussions for [name of politician] [...]”</i></p>
Health	The interview partner observed the topic of health within the legislation in the public discussion on Instagram.	<p>Keywords: Health issues, chemical impurities, high toxicity, addictive, protect, smoke, harmful, dangerous, health-endangering</p> <p>Example: <i>“[...] It was also discussed that consumers should not be able to consume adulterated cannabis, but if anything, then</i></p>

		<i>higher-quality cannabis without even more health-endangering additives."</i>
Road Safety	The interview partner observed the topic of the protection of minors within the legislation in the public discussion on Instagram.	Keywords: Road safety, traffic, driving Example: <i>"[...] road safety was not an issue at all at first, as the traffic committee was in charge, [...]"</i>
Other Drugs	The interview partner observed other drugs as part of the public discussion on the legislation on Instagram	Keywords: Other Drugs, Alcohol, Tobacco Example: <i>"[...] There are already legal drugs like alcohol and tobacco that are not as heavily regulated and are considered by proponents to cause greater harm than cannabis.[...]"</i>
Other Political Topics	The interview partner observed other political topics dominated the cannabis legislation in the public discussion on Instagram.	Keywords: Health System, necessary reforms, neglect of other relevant topics Example: <i>"[...] This system is simply overloaded, crying out for new measures, which were not tackled under the Government, although they are sorely needed. [...]"</i>
Legal Loopholes	The interview partner stated that the Cannabis Legalisation entailed legal loopholes.	Keywords: no or missing regulation, legal loopholes, incomplete draft legislation Example: <i>"[...] points of criticism in the legislation that were either not regulated [...] or where there was still no concept [...]."</i>
Code group 4: Political Work and Instagram		
(Political) Agenda	The code is applied when text passages refer to the agenda and are defined more by other codes.	Keywords: (Political) Agenda, relevant topics, agenda-setting, (own) priorities Example: <i>"[...] because and the team have a set agenda and opinion and have followed it. [...]"</i>

Criticism strengthens own opinion	The interview partner stated that Criticism strengthens their own opinion.	Keywords: to spur on, to reinforce, to strengthen in opinion, to counter-argue Example: <i>"[...] to criticise the dangers and the, in my eyes the dangers and the gaps in the draft law and personally point them out in many discussions with other colleagues in my parliamentary group. [...]"</i>
Use of Instagram	The code is applied when the interview partner describes the use and role of Instagram in their political day-to-day work and is defined more by other codes,.	Keywords: Concerns keywords on the subject of comments, dealing with information from comments etc. (reading comments, forming an opinion, political communication) Example: <i>"[...] one reads through the comments to get a picture of the mood [...]"</i>
Political Communication Tool	The code is related to the use of Instagram and was applied when the Interview partner stated that Instagram serves as a tool for external political communication.	Keywords: Instagram as a communication tool Example: <i>"[...] because it is one of the first means of communicating with the public and publicising political work."</i>
High Relevance in Work	The partner classified Instagram as high relevant for their work	Keywords: High relevance, important Example: <i>"High [relevance, use of Instagram]"</i>
Low Personal Relevance	The partner classified Instagram as low relevant for themselves on their agenda and/or opinion.	Keywords: no or too little relevance, no (main) topic of discussion, incidental, other responsibilities Example: <i>"[...] The traffic safety is rather less because other politicians are responsible for it.[...]"</i>
No Influence	The code is applied in passages when the influence of Instagram is defined in passages as non existent.	Keywords: No influence, no or marginal relevance, no affections, no impact

		Example: <i>"The perceived mood and the issues identified did not affect the political work and political presentation. [...]"</i>
(Young) Target group	The code is applied when the interview partner connects the use of Instagram with a specific target group.	Keywords: Youth, minors, young(er) Example: <i>"There is mostly a younger population on Instagram [...]"</i>
Everyday Experience	The code is applied when the interview partners refer to their daily life (private and/or work)	Keywords: Family situation, (professional) experience, previous knowledge, application of knowledge, realisation and transfer of knowledge to arguments Example: <i>"I have fully contributed my expertise as a paediatrician and adolescent doctor to the discussion."</i>
High Public Relevance	The interview partner classified Instagram as highly relevant for public discussion	Keywords: Public relevance and interest, many discussions, public exchange, high relevance Example: <i>"Due to the popularity of the topic as such, but also on Instagram, this topic received a great deal of attention attracted a great deal of attention at a national political and societal level."</i>

Instagram-Content-Sentiment Analysis Codes

Code	Definition	Keywords/Example(s) ⁷
Not Categorisable	Content and / or mood is not categorisable from subjective point of view.	Keywords: no specific, words out of context Examples: 1. <i>"Not for cannabis, but for lasering tattoos. 🤖"</i> 2. <i>"All those messibuden fridolins will be delighted"</i> 3. <i>"Oh what a pity, the German dream - citizen's money and legal weed."</i>

⁷ Translated from German

		<p>4. <i>“There is a Bibabubatzmann dancing around in the SoMe editorial office fidibumm”</i></p> <p>5. <i>“The post was in the drafts for years”</i></p>
Above-average Approval	<p>When a comment receives likes in the range of 100 to 10,000+. This indicates a high level of approval through all the accounts.</p>	<p>Exsamples:</p> <p>Tagesschau: 26 542 Likes SPD: 815 Likes ZDF_heute: 123 Likes CDU: 312 Liks</p>
Code group 1: sentiment		
Neutral towards the CBL	<p>A neutral mood in the comments towards legalisation, consumers and policymakers. Sentiment towards other drugs such as alcohol is not taken into account. Based on a subjective assessment and are partly on the borderline of not categorisable, but still have a certain connection to the topic.</p>	<p>Keywords: no specific, coding follows a subjective interpretation,</p> <p>Example:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>“Everyone has their own opinion 😊”</i> 2. <i>“then you just can't consume”</i> 3. <i>“Why can't you do the same with the time and place for alcohol? Or alcohol in separate departments in supermarkets so that children don't come into contact with it... but sometimes I have the feeling that I'm the only one who finds alcohol much more problematic than weed...”</i> 4. <i>“What about the thc tests when driving a car?”</i> 5. <i>“Scientific and sensible information is now the most important thing 🍀🌿🌸”</i>
Negative towards the CBL	<p>A negative mood in the comments towards legalisation, consumers and policy makers. Sentiment towards other drugs such as alcohol is not taken into account. Based on a subjective assessment.</p>	<p>Keywords: Unhealthy, death, harm, disability, smoking pot, getting sick, addicted to drugs, bad government, unbearable, makes politicians unbearable, failure of politics, being against, the coding can also be strongly attributed to emojis</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>“The government makes one mistake after another”</i> 2. <i>“Drugs also kill”</i> 3. <i>“I am against it.”</i> 4. <i>“Horror, I think it's just horror. The stench is unacceptable, now you can get</i>

		<p><i>the stench everywhere 🤢 and it's not good for the animals either when they breathe it in :/ ... every third teenager and adult will smoke ... streets will stink with the stuff 🤢</i></p> <p>5. <i>"Without words...where is all this going to lead"</i></p>
Positive towards the CBL	<p>A positive mood in the comments towards legalisation, consumers and policymakers. Sentiment towards other drugs such as alcohol is not taken into account. Based on a subjective assessment.</p>	<p>Keywords: best news, love you all, great time, so cool great thing, better, go legal, more to offer, safe; the coding can also be strongly attributed to emojis</p> <p>Examples. 1. <i>"Best news in a long time! I love you all 🍷 Have a great time!"</i> 2. <i>"Waited 30 years for this, it's so cool. 🔥"</i> 3. <i>"Great thing 🥰"</i> 4. <i>"It's better to go legal"</i> 5. <i>"'miserable existence' Digga, stoners have more to offer than you! Safe!"</i></p>
Code group 2: Language		
Humour	<p>Comment meets the author and or legalisation with humour</p>	<p>Keywords: no specific ones, coding based on subjective interpretation, the coding can also be strongly attributed to emojis</p> <p>Example: 1. <i>"Bibabubatzmann"</i> 2. <i>"GTA 6 is out first lol"</i> 3. <i>"'Ugh, cannabis is bad, the country is going to the dogs' - Herbert, 52, already on his 6th beer."</i> 4. <i>"Bubatz legal"</i> <i>Could also have come from Tagesscheiss. Brilliant choice of words 😂</i> 5. <i>"Helmbert says: 🚩🚩🚩🚩"</i></p>
Praise	<p>Comment meets the content creator, politicians or legalisation with praise.</p>	<p>Keywords: no specific ones, coding based on subjective interpretation, the coding can also be strongly attributed to emojis</p>

		<p>Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “<i>YOU ARE THE BABO</i> 👑👑👑👑” 2. “<i>Lauterbach man of honour</i> ❤️” 3. “<i>The man is absolutely right</i> 🔥 🍀 <i>I am proud of our health minister. It was certainly not an easy endeavour. But he has prevailed and I am eternally grateful to him for it.hats off Mr Lauterbach the glory is yours</i> 🙌🙌🙌🙌” 4. “<i>he must become federal president</i>”
<p>Insult</p>	<p>Comment meets the author and or legalisation with insults or even death threats.</p>	<p>Keywords: no specific ones, coding based on subjective interpretation, the coding can also be strongly attributed to emojis</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “<i>you completely misjudge reality, hopefully not through smoking weed</i>” 2. “<i>He’s a soup spoon (original: Suppenkasper) and nothing else</i>” 3. “<i>Klabauterbach</i> 🤪🤪🤪🤪🤪🤪” 4. “<i>Lauterbach seems totally lost and incompetent on the subject. Every young stoner writes a better and more coherent bill</i>” 5. “<i>Digga he should get vaccinated so often that he drops dead</i> <i>@karl lauterbach mdb</i>”
<p>Code group 3: Topic General Statement</p>	<p>Content contains a general statement on legalisation, policymakers, etc.</p>	<p>Keywords: no specific, coding follows a subjective interpretation</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “<i>please do not legalise.</i>” 2. “<i>My body, my choice</i>” 3. “<i>Quite simple - it’s a gateway drug. Crime in procurement will increase massively and the winners are the dealers</i>” 4. “<i>A sad day for the healthcare system. I’m not</i>”

		<p><i>arguing with addicts, I just wanted to express my opinion.”</i></p> <p>5. <i>“Legalisation brings more education.”</i></p>
General Question	<p>The code applies to comments that refer positively, favourably or neutrally to the Cannabis legalisation. Further, the content contains a general question on legalisation, policymakers, etc.</p>	<p>Keywords: no specific, coding follows a subjective interpretation of comments with a question mark.</p> <p>Examples: 1. <i>“What about driving?”</i> 2. <i>“When does the limit apply?”</i> 3. <i>“What is the situation for cannabis patients?”</i> 4. <i>“What's the situation with driving?”</i> 5. <i>“When or what is the procedure regarding the raised limit value? Many people are waiting for the information.”</i></p>
Protection of Minors	<p>The code applies to comments that refer positively, favourably or neutrally to the protection of minors, either directly or indirectly, by association with other drugs.</p>	<p>Keywords: young adults, minors, Age under 18 (Dominant 14 and 16), children, parents, educational measures, responsibility, advertising, consumption,</p> <p>Example: 1. <i>“[...] and consumers are definitely getting younger.”</i> 2. <i>“What about youth? Under 18, the whole thing remains illegal. Please, at least read the law before you start talking about the protection of minors.”</i> 3. <i>“Will alcohol, advertising for alcohol and consumption in the same zones be banned as part of the protection of minors? And smoking? And what else is harmful? Ah yes, capitalism and patriarchy. Ah, that's probably not going to happen.”</i> 4. <i>“No, young people smoke the stuff. The body is still developing up to the age of 25. It has no place in the body!”</i> 5. <i>“Why can't smoking normal cigarettes in the presence of minors also be banned?”</i></p>

Health

The health code encompasses all content that relates to the psychological and physical effects of a substance, including consequences up to death and effects of contaminated substances. It applies to comments with positive, neutral, or negative references to these health impacts.

Keywords:

Health issues, chemical impurities, high toxicity, addictive, protect, smoke, harmful, dangerous, long-term effects

Examples:

1. *“Good question, but no. Nevertheless, I can also insist on my right to integrity. And since the smoke makes me sick, I could also take legal action against it. Right ? I have to put up with people around me half drowning themselves in alcohol and I have to put up with people puffing on me and now I also have to put up with the smell of suitcases that make me sick”*
2. *“Over 400 parliamentarians have violated their oath of office. It states, among other things, "for the good of the people, to avert harm from them." Anyone who lets people jeopardise their health with their eyes open is acting criminally. Stoner Karle has done a great job.”*
3. *“Why the hell are you allowing this soon when you know and publicly advertise that it's harmful?”*
4. *“Of course there are, but what do you think a ban on alcohol would achieve? That people would stop drinking? It's more likely that illegal structures will emerge, more acquisitive crime, adulterated booze, consumers who do it secretly and socialise with other consumers, cat and mouse games with the police, organised crime to meet demand, etc. etc. This is exactly what happens when you ban drugs. It just makes it worse, people don't change because of it.”*
5. *“The problem to be solved is the chemical impurities! Which, in addition to their high toxicity, are also addictive!”*

Road Safety	<p>The “Road Safety” code is applied when comments refer to concerns or content in general related to road safety. This code can be applied in the case of alcohol with an additional reference to cannabis. The code applies to comments that refer positively, favourably or neutrally.</p>	<p><i>This would be prevented by controlled cultivation. So it will protect everyone who smokes it!”</i></p>
		<p>Keywords: Driving regulations, driving under influence, Weed residue and driving, Driving license risk, Driving and cannabis, Road accidents, Cannabis legalisation, Young drivers and cannabis, Public safety concerns, Substance use and driving, Traffic safety, Policy changes, limit (value) + related numbers</p> <p>Examples: 1. <i>” Why is everyone here calling for regulations on driving? I'd say you should do the same as with alcohol, it's best not to take anything at all if you have to drive”</i> 2. <i>“Will the absolute ban on driving with low levels of weed residue in the body also be changed?”</i> 3. <i>“yes, we already have these I formations :) the question is worded incorrectly. What happens after the recommendation of the working group ? Are we talking about a process that takes 1 year plus ? Or is this something we can expect in the next few weeks ? Because there are a lot of people who unwittingly put their livelihood at risk because of the loss of their driving licence etc....”</i> 4. <i>“I've never seen a man hit his wife after smoking. I've never seen anyone get behind the wheel after smoking and drive into a tree. Please take your tree trunk out of your bum...”</i> 5. <i>“With legalisation, more people will die. Perhaps not directly, but indirectly, e.g. through car accidents. Young people will also have easier access and will consume. The dangers for young people are</i></p>

well known. It is not for nothing that doctors are speaking out against legalisation. Of course, the justice system can then take care of other problems. There are enough."

Judiciary / Criminal Prosecution

The code "Judiciary / Criminal Prosecution" is applied when comments refer to concerns or content in general related to Judiciary / criminal prosecution after the legislation, because of the lawful changes.

Keywords:
Police, public order service, crime, black market, judges, law enforcement, limit (value), legalised/legalisation, moronic requirements, punishment, lose their driving licence

Examples:

1. *"What moronic requirements. Nobody will stick to these times. Let alone stay away from public parks and playgrounds. The public order service and police are already overloaded. The person who let this go through was obviously stoned himself and not quite clear-headed. Shame on you who legalised it. Shame on you really!"*

2. *"A tragedy! Drugs will never get better if they are legalised, even if it has some advantages that are quite understandable, but it does not eliminate crime and still encourages consumption."*

3. *"3.5 far too low, so sober people lose their driving licence without endangering other people"*

4. *"if you can't curb the black market in the normal way, with the help of our police ... then you have simply failed as a government"*

5. *"In the same way, probably half of the judges say that it makes more sense to legalise, just like police officers who are really out in the field every day, it depends on when you commission the study and where the money goes, it's just ridiculous what is being pulled off here and in the end you wonder why the country is divided."*

Other Countries	The code “Other Countries” is applied when comments refer to experiences of other countries.	<p>Netherlands (NL) USA, Canada, Portugal, Dutch, countries, California</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>“and will it be as good as in the NL? 😊”</i> 2. <i>“[...] And if someone says they see a pink elephant or something similar... then you definitely shouldn't use cannabis, besides, what did you expect in California? The USA has super blatant breeding and also overbred varieties. There is a huge difference between cannabis here and cannabis in the USA. You should also consider that...”</i> 3. <i>“The experience of other countries, such as Portugal, the USA and Canada, shows exactly the opposite. Consumption is not increasing (as it already is) and is actually falling. But I would have to do my own research to find out exactly why. I could only speculate off the top of my head.”</i> 4. <i>“Humanity has been smoking pot since ~3000 BCE, why it wasn't legal in the first place is not entirely clear to me... but I'm also Dutch, maybe we see it a bit differently here 😊”</i> 5. <i>“However, studies from countries where legalisation has already taken place say otherwise 😊”</i>
Other Political Topics	The code “Other Political Topics” is applied when comments refer to other political topics besides cannabis legalisation.	<p>Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, Economy, Hospital reform, citizen's welfare and subjective interpretations from German Politics, vaccination, pensions, pension increases, VAT catering trade, additional revenue</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>“The start of cannabis legislation will succeed, the vaccination is free of side</i>

		<p><i>effects, VAT in the catering trade will always remain at 7%, pensions are safe, blah blah blah They lie as soon as they open their mouths!"</i></p> <p>2. <i>"For example, they are currently blocking the Economic Things Act in the Bundesrat"</i></p> <p>3. <i>"Mask deals during Corona, motorway toll Scheuer, Nestlé Klöckner etc"</i></p> <p>4. <i>"in additionn, the state is certainly not spending the additional revenue on sensible things such as urgently needed pension increases"</i></p> <p>5. <i>"Will we soon have even more people who can't get their act together? After all, there is citizen's welfare."</i></p>
<p>Other Drugs</p>	<p>The code "Other Drugs" is applied when comments refer to other drugs besides cannabis.</p>	<p>Keywords: Drugs, Tobacco, heroin, crystal meth, LSD, cocaine, amphetamine, crack, medication, cigarettes</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p>1. <i>"Almost all people consume some kind of drug, whether it's alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, medication, cannabis, LSD, amphetamines, cocaine and much more."</i></p> <p>2. <i>"ah... legal drugs are far more dangerous.... there are even deaths...nobody dies with pure cannabis"</i></p> <p>3. <i>"Why can't smoking normal cigarettes in the presence of minors also be banned?"</i></p> <p>4. <i>"You do realise how much it costs us in tax revenue to enforce the ban, don't you? By that reasoning, you would also have to be against alcohol and cigarettes - find out about the costs of consuming these drugs."</i></p> <p>5. <i>"When Keter legal?"</i></p>
<p>Alcohol</p>	<p>The code "Alcohol" is applied when a comment refers explicitly to alcohol.</p>	<p>Keywords: Alcohol (Beer, spirits, wine), drink</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p>1. <i>"I have questions and am worried about beer, spirits and wine [...]"</i></p>

2. " [...] expand from 16 drink neurotoxin."

3. "Alcohol: 75,000 people die every year as a result of alcohol consumption. In contrast, there are no cannabis deaths - yet last year alone, around 200,000 criminal proceedings were opened for possession and consumption of cannabis. MOIN GERMANY



4. "The alcohol industry thanks you. How many people die from alcohol today? And from cannabis? There you go..."

5. "'Alcohol' Don't you have another argument?"
