

# Dutch government to ban tourists from cannabis shops



Fri May 27, 3:32 pm ET

AMSTERDAM (Reuters) – The Dutch government on Friday said it would start banning tourists from buying cannabis from "coffee shops" and impose restrictions on Dutch customers by the end of the year.

The Netherlands is well known for having one of Europe's most liberal soft drug policies that has made its cannabis shops a popular tourist attraction, particularly in Amsterdam.

Backed by the far-right party of anti-immigrant politician Geert Wilders, the coalition government that came into power last year announced plans to curb drug tourism as part of a nationwide program to promote health and fight crime.

"In order to tackle the nuisance and criminality associated with coffee shops and drug trafficking, the open-door policy of coffee shops will end," the Dutch health and justice ministers wrote in a letter to the country's parliament on Friday.

Under the new rules, only Dutch residents will be able to sign up as members of cannabis shops.

Dutch customers will have to sign up for at least a year's membership and each shop would be expected to have only up to 1,500 members, a justice ministry spokesman said.

The policy will roll out in the southern provinces of Limburg, Noord Brabant and Zeeland by the end of the year and the rest of the country next year, the spokesman said.

Amsterdam, home to about 220 coffee shops, is already in the process of closing some in its red light district. Some officials have resisted the measures, saying they will push the soft drug trade underground.

Some Dutch border towns including Maastricht and Terneuzen have already restricted the sale of marijuana to foreigners.

(Reporting by Greg Roumeliotis and Gilbert Kreijger; Editing by Andrew Heavens)