

**EUROPEAN COALITION FOR JUST AND EFFECTIVE DRUG POLICIES –  
ENCOD vzw**

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**Minutes of the 2007 General Assembly  
ENCOD offices, Antwerpen, Belgium  
June 22nd, 23d and 24th, 2007.**

**(by Virginia Montañes and Joep Oomen)**

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Excused: AKZEPT and Hanfjournal (Germany), Jorge Roque and Filomena Aguiar (Portugal), Enlace, Cañamo, ARSECA and FAC (Spain), SPLIFF (Poland) and Checkpoint (Netherlands).

Observers: Artur Radosz (Poland) Machteld (Germany) Khalil (Million Marijuana March, France)

## 1. COUNTRY REPORTS

The meeting started with a series of presentations on the situation of drug policies in 10 countries.

### **BELGIUM**

In 2005 a ministerial decree was introduced that softens the interpretation of the law on cannabis. Normally possession of max 3 grammes or 1 plant is not persecuted. Trekt Uw Plant tested this decree with the presentation of a common plantation of one plant per member last year. TUP was persecuted heavily but finally obtained a moral victory: only a 15 euro fine for some individual members. They have appealed to a higher court, the case will continue end of 2007, start 2008. TUP/ENCOD will organise political debate with Belgian and Dutch lord mayors on Cannabis Social Club as measure against coffeeshop tourism. An experiment with controlled distribution of heroin has started in Liege.

### **FRANCE**

Change of government: Sarkozy will promote a very restrictive law this summer. The authorities don't want to stop harm reduction and distribution of substitutes of heroin (but they will make the rules more restrictive). Zero tolerance. An expectation of 120,000 persons arrested every year. The system will be blocked with this policy. So only black and poor people will suffer the consequences. This could create a coalition to counter this repressive trend, and to propose more tolerant policies.

### **SWITZERLAND**

Attempts to modify the law. There will remain legal distribution for heroin, but the rules for substitutes will be more restrictive. The political point of view is that heroin and harm reduction policies, which were saved and continue, are more important than cannabis. When there is a good heroin and harm reduction programmes, they have too much to loose if they support cannabis reform.

A Popular initiative will be established only for cannabis. People are trying to put forward new proposals, with medical cannabis. Cannabis clubs. According to the new law, it will be possible to consume cannabis, but not to grow. The CSC was presented at a meeting with health professionals, asking for tolerance if it is less than 10 plants. They are now taking this up with parliament

members. There is a trend to stop talking about substances and start talking about addiction policy. Most of the people in jail are because of cannabis related crimes. 15 years ago it was the opposite, then there were more cocaine or heroin sentences. The cocaine & cannabis markets are mixed now. May be one old-new argument is the separation of the markets. In Switzerland, for the media, the devil is cannabis, not heroin.

## **GERMANY**

Not much movement. Small changes on cannabis. In most of the states the amount of cannabis allowed for personal use is increasing into 6 grams, except in Berlin, where the policy is getting more restrictive. There are no active cannabis associations, no action on CSC's. The situation is changing. The quality of cannabis is very low, so they are promoting harm reduction for cannabis by growing cannabis. Young people using cannabis younger. The average age to start smoking is decreasing.

Heroin distribution programme is successful. For more information on this, see: <http://www.heroinstudie.de/english.html>

The central result of the trials made in Germany indicates an significant superiority of heroin treatment over methadone. The political debate is now about 1) continuation for those already in the program and 2) to make it a regular treatment besides methadone. As the outcome of the trial is overwhelming positively, now all political .groups including the drug-czar are in favour of continuation and instalment as (strictly controlled) regular treatment **but** the Christian democratic MPs are against. Their main arguments are the costs, which are higher than methadone treatment and the aim of abstinence, which they postulate as main reason for treatment of addicts in general. Next step will be a hearing in the health commission in September, where akzept will be invited to.

## **SWEDEN**

Talking about drugs, Sweden is the best US ally in Europe. Sweden is an important donor of the UNODC. But in general, things are getting better, the debate is opening. There is a proposal by the Left Party for decriminalisation of consumption. In every party there is small opposition against the official drug policy. But they don't come together. ECAD is a big organisation of local authorities in Europe. Very prohibitionist, based in Sweden. But ECAD is not so strong in Sweden, the strongest voice is the Health Department. The man behind ECAD is Thomas Hallberg, a former policeman. ECAD see themselves as an NGO, which is little strange, since they are authorities.

Although cannabis seeds are legal, growing is illegal, and there is a campaign going on against growing. But no cannabis social clubs can be expected in Sweden for a long time.

More or less free access to subutex and methadone. Needle exchange has started in Malmo. You cannot go to a pharmacy and buy needles, you need a prescription. So the experiment is quite unique. At the moment the HIV epidemic is not visible.

## **THE NETHERLANDS**

A very strong pressure by the US to make NL change the drug laws. Since 2004 the pressure has been reduced, but not finished. Giving rights to people diminishes the problems. This has been the discourse in NL. Now this discourse has been turned down, what about the problems? The problem is that the political climate in NL is all about repression. The solution is to put all this people away (the drug users).

In three years, almost all the homeless people should be out of the street. Those who don't want to collaborate with the social services will go to jail. Many consumption rooms are being closed.

The government wants to close down a large part of the coffeeshops. It is almost impossible to start a coffee shop. In the last 10 years various coffee shops have been closed, and now anything can be used to close them (like the close presence of a school). But on the other hand, in some small towns (5 or 6) coffee shops have been opened, without much publicity. The normalization practice is still going on, but the official discourse is that "we want to get rid of the coffee shops". There is a strangulation of the coffee shops, they are disappearing little by little. Cannabis has been an explosive business in NL. Dutch don't import anymore, almost 95% of the coffee shops have national grown weed. The organisation of the coffee shops is now very sophisticated, so it is very difficult for the police to catch the back door. More than 50% of the Dutch population doesn't object against the coffee shops. The production side of the cannabis market has increased very much, Dutch growers are exporting now. So it is going to be very difficult to stop that.

## **UNITED KINGDOM**

Zero tolerance on all drugs except alcohol, in House of Commons there are 37 pubs for 700 MPs. There is no serious political debate going on. Essentially the goal of drug policies is to cause a public panic.

The classification of illegal drugs in the UK: Class a: heroin cocaine xtc, amended with magic mushrooms last year, Class b: amphetamines, Class c: cannabis since 2004

The police lobbied for the reclassification of cannabis, they want to concentrate on class a. Still 85 % of drug related arrests are cannabis related, they target growers, specially medical suppliers, activists like Granma Pat Tabram. We have had clandestine places where to buy cannabis, medical users. British manufacturers of cannabis chocolate have been very succesfull, they are exporting even to the Netherlands

## **SPAIN**

Socialist party promised to decriminalise but now in government they are more repressive than the conservatives, the number of fines because of cannabis consumption is increasing and this statistics are used to justify repression and to create social alarm. 3 parliamentary groups have proposed the modification of the Law on citizen's security that imposes fines from 301 to 6000 euro and the retirement of the driving and arms licence for consumption or possession in public places.

Pannagh was acquitted, they also got their marijuana back, more clubs are being created but with a low profile. Also in the Basque country, Amigos de Maria has started a public cannabis pharmacy.

Sativex can be prescribed, (if 5 countries in Europe have installed this it should be legal in the whole of the EU). There have been 2 experiments with heroin distribution, which have stopped because of a decision of national health minister. Injection rooms have opened in Cataluña and they are elaborating a map on the needs of injecting users. A third experiment has been asked in the Bask Country, but they didn't get any response.

Growing tendency to associate, FAUDAS, ENCOD member and an injecting drugs users association is now involved in every decision making organism and technical commission in Spain. FAUDAS is also present in the technical committee of the IHRA Conference in Barcelona, they invite ENCOD to make a presentation or to propose another kind of intervention in the Conference, we will present a proposal.

Pill testing is taking place in Andalucía, Cataluña and the Basque country.

## **POLAND**

A repressive policy, all drugs are illegal, the possession of any drug is illegal, even paraphernalia possession is considered dangerous. The IHRA conference in Warsaw was held long away of the centre, close to the airport, very few Polish people came there. Alcohol is our own culture, smoking ban is introduced 1 July, the police is patrolling on public drinking. EU has supplied drug tests for workers and drivers. In general the government is unstable, there will be next elections in 2 years.

Government does not want to put cannabis issue on the agenda, the Polish president makes confusion between hemp and marijuana. Say one thing but in practice differently, freedom to express is respected. Seeds are illegal but you can buy them. No difference between industrial and recreational cannabis.

Methadone is legal, but very strict rules. Needle exchange are considered to help drug use, any promotion of psycho active substances is forbidden. If a drug user is arrested, he can go to rehabilitation, then a sentence can be avoided.

## **ITALY**

In Italy the situation is very complicated, there is a new centre left coalition. People were expecting the government to change the law, but they are not doing very much. In the end of June a new law is being prepared. More news to follow.

## **2. BUREAUCRATICAL DECISIONS**

The situation of suspended members was discussed. All suspensions were confirmed , it was mentioned that CIRC will probably pay its membership if contacted through another mail address. Artur Radosz has been offered the

possibility to re-apply as a member of ENCOD if he has been able to pay back a loan dating from 2005 within the coming 6 months.

The annual report on 2006 was approved, all Steering Committee members have been relieved from their duties.

Three Steering Committee Members (Jan van der Tas, Christine Kluge and Farid Ghehiouche) stepped down as SC members. They were thanked for their valuable efforts of the past years. Virginia Montañes, Marina Impallomeni and Joep Oomen continue as SC members. Alessandra Viazzi and Alberto Sciolari (PIC) will assist Marina in her Steering Committee tasks.

**After an election took place, and Fredrick Polak (26 votes), Andre Fürst (21 votes) and Jan Ludewig (20 votes) were elected as new members of the steering committee. Timothy Gluckman (9 votes) will be available as a contact person for all members who wish to issue a criticism on the steering committee and for some reason do not want to contact the SC directly. Filomena Aguiar and Jorge Roque (3 votes both), who also participated in the election, were thanked for their support and interest.**

The new Steering Committee consists of:

Virginia Montañes, chairperson  
Marina Impallomeni, secretary  
Joep Oomen, treasurer  
Fredrick Polak  
Andre Fürst  
Jan Ludewig

We had no candidates from Eastern Europe, but the door is open. Their participation is important. The steering committee should take this into account.

Steering Committee members have to ensure decisions of GA are being implemented, should make decisions on concrete proposals coming from ENCOD secretariat, and defend those decisions. SC Members need to be cooperative, should consider the multiple voices that are part of the organisation, think strategically, not diplomatically necessarily. Only Steering Committee Members can represent ENCOD, if any other member wishes to represent ENCOD in a conference or meeting they should first contact the secretariat or the steering committee.

#### **Financial perspectives:**

The regular office costs of ENCOD are 3.000 euro per month. We have 10.000 euro now in the bank. This means that we have money to ran the office for another three months. If no big donors are found soon Joep will go in unemployment in September/October, so we can maintain the office (phone bills, etc.) until next year, when new memberships come in.

To be able to finance all activities on a yearly basis we need 60.000 euro, but we did not obtain this money yet. Still we are growing in memberships, we are growing in quality: the eurodrugs list is becoming more what it should be, a

forum to discuss drug policies and to exchange information. The website is more professional, the number of visitors has increased (into 1500-day). We are achieving some things with the CSC campaign. The EU will start the dialogue process and we should be there.

Ideas for fundraising:

- Getting new members in (everybody can do this) This means going to the hemp fairs, visiting shops and companies and convince them to become a member (anonymously if they want). If you want to know more about if a company in your neighbourhood has been contacted yet, contact ENCOD first.
- To make the membership interesting for people, both individuals and organisations.
- We don't have strategies to apply for funding in institutions or organisms. We have done it before but not anymore.
- Improve media coverage on what it is happening in each country. The bulletin could only consist of this information.
- Special gifts for new memberships. With nice designs that people want to have, not to make propaganda (new T-shirts of Info Chanvre)
- Create a political party and to get funding of the local budgets to grant political activities during the elections. Everybody is asked to send Laurent (kebra@noos.fr) information about the conditions in their countries.
- Cooperate with growshop on sale of starting kits for personal consumption.
- Ask companies to distribute our flyers
- Money box campaign like in Spain.
- Festival or music concert, there is now a venue in Malaga where Amparanoia and Manu Chau could play, Laurent offers to invest in the concert if Manu Chau comes (Xavier Pratel should be contacted to ask Manu Chau again)
- We could create a new kind of membership, for the "passivists", people who is not so interested in being active, but they want to become a member.

### **Website Group**

This is the Action Group: the people who work on the daily needs of the organisation. For example: to write a text for the flyer, to work on the website, to call people to prepare Vienna, etc.. The first task of this group is to maintain the website: especially people who know about design and languages are invited to participate.

The website group has been established, consisting for the moment of: Alberto, Alessandra, Marina (Italy), Alexandra and Gota (Poland), Alun and Mark (UK), Andre, Sylvia, Christian (Switzerland), Farid, Jean-Michel, Laurent and Khalil (France), Jonas (Sweden), Juha (Finland), Paco, Virginia, Vigente (Spain), Maria (Slovakia), Jan, Martin, Steffen, Timothy (Germany), Joep, Martin, Olivier (Belgium). More people are welcome to participate!

### **3. CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES**

#### **FREEDOM TO FARM – CANNABIS SOCIAL CLUBS**

The FREEDOM TO FARM campaign was initiated in 2005. It is focussed on cannabis but there are also other plants that are forbidden: coca, mushrooms, opium poppy. We should have a reflection on these as well, and find out how to integrate their context in the campaign.

The campaign can become more concrete with the presentation of the Cannabis Social Clubs concept, a non profit, ecological and controlled way of cultivating cannabis and distributing cannabis to adults who need or want it (see the experiences of Trekt Uw Plant in Belgium or Pannagh in Spain).

The CSC can be put up according to local legislation and practices. Also in countries where cultivation is still impossible, “virtual” CSC’s could be set up just to promote the idea. In stead of plants they could offer (legal or other kind of) services to their clients - there are experiences in the UK (LCA) and Spain (Amigos de Maria) – or free distribution of hemp/cannabis seeds (experiences of Polish Hemp Lobby)

We may obtain media impact if we present the CSC through public events in different countries, following a path during several months, that would end with the events in Vienna in March 2008. We could start off in October, using an agenda going from country to country, publishing a flyer in different languages, pointing out the main issues of a CSC: a cooperative, restricted system that only grows what is necessary for the members. No production for export, no diversion to minors, no trade.

The events can be anything from a debate with experts, a cycle of films, a real working CSC, a spread the seed action, even just a short declaration with a press release would be possible. It would be important to obtain the support of one or two local politicians for the idea. The objective of the event would also be to activate consumers, not only media and politicians. Until now we have just a few associations working on something that affects millions of people.

Apart from the CSC campaign flyer, we may write a manifesto on Freedom to Farm and the principle of the CSC and start to collect signatures among experts, politicians, artists, etc. to be presented in March 2008 in Vienna. Initiatives about CSC for medical patients could be very good. As proposals for slogans for the CSC the following were:

- Citizens not criminals
- Invitation to sit, to talk, to discuss.
- Quality control
- Grow locally, act globally
- A healthy option
- Who’s responsible for the drugs in your town?
- Save plants, save life, save the planet.

## **DECISIONS:**

**A working group has been created to decide on the follow up of the CSC campaign, consisting of Virginia (Spain), Adriaan (Netherlands), Alberto (Italy), Steffen (Germany), Alexandra (Poland), Alun (UK), Farid (France), Andre (Switzerland), Paco (Spain), Juha (Finland).**

**All groups who would like to participate in this campaign and establish a (virtual or real) Cannabis Social Club in their country are requested to plan an event in their country between 1 October 2007 and 15 March 2008, and inform the ENCOD secretariat about this before 15 September 2007, so the information can be put in the CSC flyer that we will produce in september.**

Possible title of a flyer text: GROW LOCALLY - ACT GLOBALLY

UK and Italy will probably concentrate on medical cannabis. Info Chanvre will present pictures on bad weed during the summer and post them in the website.

## **CAMPAIGN VIENNA 2008**

### **Some proposals were coming from outside the Assembly**

- Jorge Roque, Portugal: create groups of discussion with experts, professionals, lawyers, etc., to prepare documents for Vienna
- Robert Field, Common Sense for Drug Policy, US. Three days in Vienna could attract many people, it is necessary to start organising soon.
- Transnational Radical Party is calling for actions in Vienna in 2008.

According to information coming from the official process, in 2008 a report by experts will be presented during the CND meeting, then one year of reflection will be opened and governments will present their conclusions in a top level summit in 2009.

The challenge will be to open the discussion in that year of reflection, to force governments to involve citizens in this reflection. Vienna 2008 will be a political event if we make it into one. Of course promoting the debate in the member countries will be more effective than promoting the debate in the streets of Vienna. But the Vienna 2008 moment could be the starting point of that.

## **IDEAS:**

Contact other organisations who work in the Vienna context and propose them to write together a real high level report, as serious as the official one.

Organise a three day event in Vienna, including a conference with experts, a demonstration, the inauguration of a monument, and an ENCOD General Assembly

MMM groups around Europe could be especially invited to come to Vienna and use the opportunity to organise a meeting among them there

Reactivate the ICN, update the Manifesto of 1998, collect new signatures in every country and present it in Vienna as a legitimate claim from citizens from the entire world.

Ask the essential questions: what is the reason for people to take drugs, what role do they play in human civilisation? And: why are drugs forbidden, who benefits from prohibition?

Create a forum in the ENCOD website to discuss on the Vienna activities.

## **PROPOSALS:**

A world without prohibition. We can do it.

Prohibition is just a political dogma. There are no scientific evidences that prove it is working.

Responsible use is only possible when you have updated information. We are responsible. We are citizens. We don't need anyone to tell us what we have to do.

Mystery campaign. We can focus the campaign advertising on the three days in Vienna without saying what it is about, so we produce curiosity.

## **DECISIONS**

**A working group has been established to coordinate the Vienna campaign, consisting of Farid, Joep, Laurent, Paco, Steffen, Kris and Andre. Enrico Fletzer of Radio K and Susanna Ronconi of Forum Droghe accepted to be the Italian representatives on this group. Laurent will try to find somebody from the Eastern countries.**

On the logo contest campaign: difficult to choose a logo because we have asked the designers a logo on Stop the War on Drugs. Now the majority has shown a preference on the message: "A world without prohibition. We can do it". The Vienna working group will decide the final message and ask the designers to work on the basis of that message, to make a banner.

We can make a design of a flyer on internet and people could print and copy it themselves.

André will organise a meeting with the Austrian organisations to coordinate with them.

A budget and campaign proposal should be made in October. Then a poster could be made to distribute in the whole of Europe and we could ask companies to put their logo on it in exchange of a substantial amount until so we have aprox. 10.000 euro for the event. There will be opportunities in Madrid (Expocannabis, 2/3/4 november) and Amsterdam (Cannabis Cup, end of November 2007) to contact companies.

## 4. EU LOBBY

On 21 June we were informed about a new site opened by the European Commission with regards to follow up on the "Green Paper". The next phase of this process should be the publication of the comments of citizens on the Green Paper. On this site there is a report on the comments received, but originally there was no link to the original version of those comments. The link is there now and it is working.

The plan of the Commission is to organise a Conference in the end of 2007 where they will invite 30 representatives of civil society to start the discussion on how the dialogue would take place. Interested organisations are invited to send an application before 17 August.

The process of dialogue with the European Union has not been clear/transparent. We know the Commission has 1 million euro to spend in 2007 on this process, one conference for 30 people is not costing that much. Late last year, we had some frictions with the Commission, the comments were received that the European Commission wanted to take out Encod because they find us too radical.

We have asked to the Parliament to intervene both for the comments and also to learn about the situation with the budget line (if the money is not used by 2007, the risk is that it will not be available again in 2008). We have to make sure that authorities change their perception of Encod, we are not extremists, but concerned citizens.

### **Strategy**

It is good to try to take part in the dialogue process with as many organisations as possible. ENCOD will circulate its own proposal through member mailing list, people can use it if they want to make an own application.

Drug policies will still be decided upon by member states but the European level is important because the perception should be that there is a uniform approach. So trying to influence this approach is important, ENCOD has a legitimate position to do so. The dialogue is an achievement. We can use it in two different ways. We should be positive, but also critical. If the final dialogue does not represent more than another chatclub, we have to operate critical. It is not sure that the Commission will be more capable of organising the dialogue than before. Also Members of Parliament know this.

The risk is that the consultation will take place with organizations which get money from the Commission for one reason or another. We are people affected and concerned with drug policies. It will be very important to ensure this view is represented.

Everybody should and can apply to the EU dialogue programme, see [http://ec.europa.eu/justice\\_home/news/consulting\\_public/news\\_consulting\\_public\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/news/consulting_public/news_consulting_public_en.htm)

Virginia will make a questionnaire that all members can use to issue their main priorities and put it on the website. Maybe a report will be produced, otherwise at least we will use them in the application.

## **OTHER ISSUES**

We need to create mailing lists in every country so members can coordinate at the national level. Jan will look into this.

We need somebody who writes the monthly bulletin sometimes.

## **ACTIVITY CALENDAR 2007/2008**

21 July: Day of the Victims of the Drug War (mostly Germany and Denmark)  
Follow up: Joep

17 August: Deadline for application to EU Dialogue programme. Follow up:  
Joep/SC

15 September: Deadline for Cannabis Social Club flyer. All participating groups should inform ENCOD of date and place of event between 1 October 2007 – 15 March 2008. Follow up: CSC Working Group

2/3/4 November: Expocannabis Hemp Fair in Madrid: Follow up: Joep-Virginia

5-8 December: DPA Conference in New Orleans, USA. Follow up: Joep  
We should try to obtain funds to go there with at least 2 people but be prepared to custom problems.

January/February 2008: Hemp fairs in Barcelona and Amsterdam. Follow up:  
Joep

Between 15 and 30 March 2008: CND Meeting in Vienna. Follow up: Vienna Working Group

March 2008: Hemp Fair in Switzerland. Follow up: Joep

3 May 2008: MMM. Follow up: CSC Working Groups

11 – 15 May 2008: IHRA Conference, Barcelona  
Faudas asks us to propose a session for this conference, we react positively and will take final decision in October. Follow up: SC

21 – 23 June 2008: ENCOD General Assembly  
Amigos de Maria Vitoria proposes to investigate if support can be obtained for organising it in Vitoria. Follow up: SC

## **IDEAS FOR AFTER 2008**

We should concentrate more on giving information, build up a centre of knowledge and action around drugs. Driven by memberships, we should focus on addiction, less on drugs, make a book for parents, organise a political party getting money through elections, make drug education – first aid tips.....