



European Coalition for Just and Effective Drug Policies (ENCOD)

Secretariat: Lange Lozanastraat 14 - 2018 Antwerpen - Belgium

Tel: +32 (0)3 293 0886

E-mail: office@encod.org; Web: www.encod.org

Report on ENCOD's General Assembly 2008

1. List of Participants

- Andria Efthimiou-Mordaunt, JMT, UK
- Victor, Faudas, Spain
- Joep Oomen, Encod, Belgium
- Virginia Montañes , Encod, Spain
- Eduardo López Arriero, Encod, Spain
- Astrid Forschner, Germany
- Ingrid Wunn, VfD Germany
- Willemijn Los, MDHG, Netherlands
- Fredrick Polak, SDB, Netherlands
- Jean-Michel Rodriguez + son, AICC Cannabis Cafe, Spain/France
- Inma de Pando and Pedro Quesada, ENLACE, Spain
- Alun Buffry, Lesley James, Samantha Pates, LCA, UK
- Sylvia Weisskopf, Chanvre-Info / Zum Hinkelstein, Switzerland
- Jan Ludewig, Germany
- Jorge Roque, Portugal
- Christine Kluge, Akzept, Germany
- Antonio Valenzuela, AICC Cannabis Cafe, Spain
- Leonardo Esteve and Antonio, Alacannabis, Spain
- Alberto Sciolari, PIC, Italy
- Alessandra Viazzi, PIC, Italy
- Martín Barriuso, Pannagh, Spain
- Paco Mascaraque, Amigos de Maria, Spain
- Iker Val, Ganjazz, Spain
- Iker, La Regadera, Spain
- Adriana, Vitoria, Spain
- Ana Pertika, Spain

2. Bureaucratic Decisions

2.1. Annual Report 2007

The annual report has been approved unanimously by the General Assembly and all Steering Committee Members have been released from their financial responsibilities for the year 2007.

2.2. Financial Perspectives

ENCOD's financial situation is stable until the end of the year 2008, though for the beginning of 2009, additional money must be raised as experience shows that many members of ENCOD fail to pay their membership-fee at the beginning of the year.

Currently ENCOD can not sustain on normal membership-fees alone, we need to increase the membership or find other ways to generate income.

2.3. Membership statistics and suspension of members

13 members were suspended for not replying to inquiries about paying their membership-fee for 2008.

The suspensions were approved by the General Assembly after a brief discussions.

Suspended members may protest their suspension by email to office@encod.org.

Including the suspended members ENCOD currently has 160 members; no member cancelled membership in 2008.

It was brought forward that ENCOD could benefit from an entry-level membership that should be available for a much lower fee but without the right to vote on ENCOD's matters. With the overhead that comes with processing lots of small fees and the fees for international transactions, this idea cannot be implemented within the current structure of ENCOD. The idea to have national representatives of ENCOD collect those fees and transfer them to ENCOD en gros was met positively, though no final decision has been arrived at. This idea shall be elaborated during the next months.

3. Situation of the secretariat

Virginia Montañes presented the results of the questionnaire sent to the ENCOD members to evaluate the functioning of ENCOD. 38 filled questionnaires were received. The results of the questionnaire will be published in the [forum](#). According to the responses to the questionnaire, our members think that we are fulfilling between regular and sufficiently our objectives. Most of the participants in the questionnaire think that ENCOD is transparent enough and that they receive enough information of the network. There is a massive support to the co-ordinator among the members, most of them think that his work is very useful and only three critical comments were received on this issue. The main weakness is that there is no or very little national co-ordination among the members. When asked about the structure of ENCOD, the participants don't think there is a need to change ENCOD's decision-making structure.

The coordinator of the network, Joep Oomen, is going on a paid sabbatical for July and August. During that time, the minimum level of office-work will be done by the Steering Committee, coordinated by Virginia Montañes.

This sabbatical and the fact that it is a paid one has been decided by the Steering Committee unanimously and has been approved by the General Assembly.

3.1. Functioning of the Steering Committee

A member of the Steering Committee has a problem in trusting the coordinator and another member expressed concerns with regard to the methods used by the coordinator in his work. As both members believe that the reasons for the problems they see lies solely in the amount of work that

has to be done by the coordinator, it was unanimously agreed by the SC that we will evaluate the situation again in a meeting on 5th and 6th September, in Amsterdam. It must be stated, that there is very little doubt among the members of the Steering Committee, that the SC will resume its normal operations then.

The General Assembly expressed that if the problems can not be solved within the steering committee, then a new steering committee should be elected and this could be done through a vote on Internet.

4. Communication Strategies

To enhance the communication of ENCOD we have to distinguish between the target-audiences we want to reach.

4.1. Media

Media want short, unequivocal statements and personal stories and testimonies.

The important thing for ENCOD is not to take over the role of the victim.

Ideas elaborated in the General Assembly were:

1. demand treatments, not prisons
2. having obligations as a citizens, drug-users also have rights

These ideas will be further elaborated in the forum.

4.2. Authorities, academia and professionals

After decades of prohibition, we cannot expect a sudden change in drug-policies.

Decision-makers need to be given realistic proposals of alternative policies, steps that they can assume. At this moment they would not accept radical discourses since it would mean to accept the failure of prohibition and thus the failure of their policies. This must be taken into account when communicating with authorities by showing ways towards a just and effective drug-policies that don't blame current authorities.

4.3. General Public

To reach the general public, ENCOD must be more visible on national and local level.

We must work out ways to facilitate incorporation of ENCOD's logo and message into the work done by local and national organizations.

A questionnaire on how do we promote ENCOD will be prepared and distributed among members along this year by Virginia Montañes. The goal is to collect ideas to better promote ENCOD in our countries. It was also proposed to produce a flyer presenting ENCOD to the general public. Inma (ENLACE) and Antonio (Barcelona, Cannabiscafe) offered to work on a draft.

André Fürst proposed to invest 3,000€ for translations of important ENCOD informations (for example the bulletin) in a professional level so that all members can read the information in their mother tongues, since our main problem is that there is not very much information in other languages. No decision on this was taken, it will be discussed by the SC in September, analysing the budget we have for the rest of the year and the possibilities to raise funds for that.

4.4. Members and other activists

The results of the questionnaire among ENCOD's members show that most members did not do the shift to the new communication facilities which were installed to facilitate participation in ENCOD's decision-making process (i.e., most of ENCOD's members did not switch to the forum from mailing-lists and bulletin.)

To use the participatory possibilities better, the attendees of the General Assembly agreed upon using the forum from now on instead of the mailing-list. It was proposed to integrate a chat-room into the forum, which has been proven to be a useful tool for motivating people to visit the forum more often. Jan Ludewig will check with the webmaster, Christian Furrer, whether this is possible. The website is designed in a way that allows every member of ENCOD to put texts online but we need to teach people how to use it so that more people are able to participate.

The idea of creating a tutorial-video was brought forward, but so far nobody volunteered to create it.

5. Campaign Activities

5.1. Freedom to Farm

The questionnaire shows that the members of ENCOD see this campaign very positively, although the media coverage is still our weak point.

The General Assembly agreed upon extending the Freedom to Farm-campaign with two new campaigns:

1. ENCOD will support producers of coca-tea. This could be done by developing a Coca Social Club model and/or by creating import- and distribution-channels for their products. These ideas will be elaborated after September.
2. ENCOD is supporting the Moroccan platform for legalization of hemp for industrial and cannabis for medicinal purposes by issuing a press-release and/or by integrating this topic into the declaration on harm reduction.

5.2. Cannabis Social Clubs (CSC)

The questionnaire shows that the continuation of the CSC-campaign is supported by ENCOD's members.

There are currently 12 Cannabis Social Clubs in Spain, working a varying levels of sophistication, and one in Belgium. To facilitate the creation of more CSCs, Martin Barriuso will create a document detailing the steps required to create a CSC. He will provide a draft to the members of ENCOD in July. A discussion on the possibilities to apply this model to other drugs was held, but no conclusions were reached. The discussion derived on the need to analyse how harm reduction is being defined and implemented by the official institutions and to define how more just and effective harm reduction policies should be.

5.3. Elections to the European Parliament 2009

ENCOD could present a list of basic measures that a truly just and effective drug policy must include, and ask parties that participate in the EP elections to subscribe, so we will recommend people to vote for them.

Those members of ENCOD, who wish to create a list to participate in the EP elections will receive

all our support, but for the moment we will not create such a list ourselves.

6. Lobby activities

6.1. EU Civil Society Forum

The meeting in December 2007 was badly organized and had no goal set, which led to meeting without any concrete outcome. This was also realized by the European Commission.

The meeting in May 2008 was organized better, even though several points have to be criticized:

1. Discussion of ideology was not allowed, as this would prevent a concrete outcome to emerge from the discussion.
2. Controversial proposals were not allowed, as these would not be accepted by the member states of the European Union anyway and there this would also prevent a concrete outcome.
3. The organizations allowed to that forum were unfairly distributed among the fractions: 2 organizations did not have any relation to civil society at all, half were harm-reductionists and the rest was mostly only little critical of the current drug-policies or straight prohibitionists. Anti-prohibitionist organizations were a very small minority.

The criteria organizations have to fulfill to receive a funding for their work were only published on March 12th and the deadline for handing in the applications was April 10th. The amount of papers required for an application in combination with the short time in which they should have been created, was simply too much for an organization like ENCOD. Even though the European Commission admits that these 4 weeks were very short, the process of distributing the funds is not going to change in 2009, only the application-period will be 8 instead of 4 weeks.

In summary, the forums were only to discuss what the European Commission put on the agenda and this agenda was clearly designed to support current drug-policies.

Results of the questionnaire on this topic: although the members are not very optimistic about the possibilities to make some effect in the European official position on drug policies, there is a majoritarian support to continue participating in the CS Forum on drugs.

6.2. The Beyond 2008 Forum

Freek Polak is going to represent ENCOD there. He is going to ask for the discussion of alternative policies to be put onto the Agenda for 2009. ENCOD's members are invited to have their say on what he should say on ENCOD's website.

Results of the questionnaire on this topic: very similar to those on the EU CS Forum: although the members are not very optimistic about the possibilities to make some effect in the official position on drug policies, there is a majoritarian support to continue participating in the process.

6.3. Project-proposals for receiving EU-funding

Virginia Montañes proposed a project to gather data on alternative policies, the level of participation local organizations achieve and the different laws and conventions in the EU-member countries. This proposal needs some more work and will be distributed to the members of ENCOD once the draft has been finalized. The aim of this project was generally well-perceived by the attendees of the General Assembly, though doubts were brought forward, that the EU will fund such a project as they don't profit from it directly. Further discussion of this project will happen in ENCOD's web-forum.

7. Evaluation of the CND-Meeting in Vienna, March 2008

7.1. The CND-Meeting

Freek Polak attended the meeting and observed a few positive but more negative developments. On the positive side, more attention has been given to human rights and harm reduction, partly because a number of big, well-funded, international organizations are fighting for human rights in the field of drug-policy. Another positive point was, that even Antonia Maria Costa, head of the UNODC, admitted that current drug-policy is "unfit for purpose".

On the negative side, the failure of drug-policy is presented as an easily solvable problem for which only a proper plan must be developed. Only a few countries expressed doubts on this point of view. All of the countries failed to recognize the structural dilemma built into the UNODC by combining drugs and crime in a single office. Furthermore it was observed, that not all of the resolutions have been published even a month after the meeting and that the audience was mainly US-American, with the majority of them belonging to the prohibitionist fraction.

7.2. ENCOD's actions

The questionnaire showed that most of ENCOD's members perceived the attempts ENCOD made well, though the results of these attempts were generally seen as less good. Joep Oomen, the coordinator of the events, identified three problems ENCOD suffered from:

1. There was no local coordination in Vienna.
2. The distribution of promotional material did not work well.
3. People seem to skip demonstrations, maybe it is more worthwhile to think of other ways.

8. Plans for the CND-Meeting in Vienna, March 2009

Several proposals have been made though no decision was taken. Jan Ludewig will [put these proposals into ENCOD's web-forum](#) where they are to be discussed by ENCOD's members. Freek Polak and Jan Ludewig will then create budget-proposals for the most promising ideas until October 1st, so that ENCOD can ask potential sponsors at the upcoming hemp-fairs, of which the first is in Vienna on October 10-12th. People also expressed suggestions for cheap and simple propaganda campaigns that could be repeated throughout Europe such as intuitive publicity campaigns etc., (putting posters with just figures and reveal the secret behind it (amounts of prisoners, money spent in the drug war, etc.) some time later..

9. Other topics discussed

9.1. Supporting research into therapeutic use of Ibogaine

Joep Oomen will coordinate the preparation of a document on the therapeutic use of Iboga.

It will be a working document with the information available on the latest research and experiences on this subject, recommending among others further research into its use.

9.2. Criticism of European Harm Reduction Policies

Virginia Montañes will coordinate the elaboration of a working document on harm reduction

policies in Europe. FAUDAS will prepare a questionnaire for distribution among ENCOD's members that want to participate. This questionnaire will be sent to Virginia Montañes and she will write a draft document to ENCOD's members for comments before publishing it.