

## Minutes ENCOD General Assembly June 2007

(by Virginia Montañes and Joep Oomen)\*

Participants:

- 1) Alun Buffry, LCA / UK / [alun@ccguide.org.uk](mailto:alun@ccguide.org.uk)
- 2) Mark Palmer LCA / UK / [alun@ccguide.org.uk](mailto:alun@ccguide.org.uk)  
<mailto:[wolfgang@axamit.at](mailto:wolfgang@axamit.at)>
- 3) Antonio Valenzuela / Cannabiscafe / Spain /  
[a.valenzuela@publibaix.com](mailto:a.valenzuela@publibaix.com)
- 4) Beatriz / Cannabiscafe / Spain / [a.valenzuela@publibaix.com](mailto:a.valenzuela@publibaix.com)
- 5) Jonas Levin / NORMAL /Sweden / [levin@hush.com](mailto:levin@hush.com)  
<mailto:[levin@hush.com](mailto:levin@hush.com)>
- 6) Steffen/ Hanfparade/DHV / Germany / [steffen@hanfparade.de](mailto:steffen@hanfparade.de)
- 7) Paco Mascaraque / Amigos de Maria / Spain/ [info@amigosdemaria.com](mailto:info@amigosdemaria.com)\*\*
- 8) Jan van der Tas / SDB / Netherlands / [jantasvd@xs4all.nl](mailto:jantasvd@xs4all.nl)  
<mailto:[jantasvd@xs4all.nl](mailto:jantasvd@xs4all.nl)>
- 9) Farid Ghehioeche/CAM R-D, France/ [farid@no-log.org](mailto:farid@no-log.org)
- 10) Bruno Valkeneers/Liaisons Antiprohibitionnistes/Belgium/  
[l.a@skynet.be](mailto:l.a@skynet.be)
- 11) Sjoerd Berkhuisen / Legalize / Netherlands / [sjoerdski@msn.com](mailto:sjoerdski@msn.com)  
<mailto:[sjoerdski@msn.com](mailto:sjoerdski@msn.com)>
- 12) Vicente Orlegi /Cannabiscafe / Spain / [la.orlegi@hotmail.com](mailto:la.orlegi@hotmail.com)
- 13) Esther / Cannabiscafe / Spain / [la.orlegi@hotmail.com](mailto:la.orlegi@hotmail.com)  
<mailto:[la.orlegi@hotmail.com](mailto:la.orlegi@hotmail.com)>
- 14) Daan / MDHG/ Netherlands / [Willemijn@mdhg.nl](mailto:Willemijn@mdhg.nl)  
<mailto:[Willemijn@mdhg.nl](mailto:Willemijn@mdhg.nl)>
- 15) Jan Ludewig / Hanfparade / Germany / [jl@encod.org](mailto:jl@encod.org)  
<mailto:[jan@lieblinx.net](mailto:jan@lieblinx.net)>
- 16) Kris Verdonck/Belgium/ [kverdonck@skynet.be](mailto:kverdonck@skynet.be)  
<mailto:[kverdonck@skynet.be](mailto:kverdonck@skynet.be)>\_\_\_
- 17) Joep Oomen/ENCOD/Belgium/ [info@encod.org](mailto:info@encod.org)
- 18) Stijn Goossens/STAD-Breakline/Belgium [hardcoreharmreducer@gmail.com](mailto:hardcoreharmreducer@gmail.com)
- 19) Jules Sinturel / France / [jules.s@voila.fr](mailto:jules.s@voila.fr)  
<mailto:[jules.s@voila.fr](mailto:jules.s@voila.fr)>
- 20) Jean-Michel Rodriguez / Cannabiscafe / France /  
[jean-michel.rodriquez@wanadoo.fr](mailto:jean-michel.rodriquez@wanadoo.fr)  
<mailto:[jean-michel.rodriquez@wanadoo.fr](mailto:jean-michel.rodriquez@wanadoo.fr)>
- 21) Olivier De Vilain/ individual member / ENCOD /Belgium /  
[devilain@hotmail.com](mailto:devilain@hotmail.com) <mailto:[devilain@hotmail.com](mailto:devilain@hotmail.com)>
- 22) Adriaan Jansen / individual member / ENCOD /Netherlands /  
[jan87216@planet.nl](mailto:jan87216@planet.nl)
- 23) Marina Impallomeni/Forum Droghe/Italy/ [mimpallomeni@fuoriluogo.it](mailto:mimpallomeni@fuoriluogo.it)
- 24) Virginia Montañes/ Spain/ [virginiamontanes@yahoo.es](mailto:virginiamontanes@yahoo.es)
- 25) Laurent Appel / Chanvre Info / Switzerland / [kebra@noos.fr](mailto:kebra@noos.fr)
- 26) André Fürst / Chanvre Info /Switzerland / [info@chanvre-info.ch](mailto:info@chanvre-info.ch)
- 29) Alessandra Viazzi /PIC/ Italy/ [\\_aleviazzi@libero.it](mailto:_aleviazzi@libero.it)  
<mailto:[aleviazzi@libero.it](mailto:aleviazzi@libero.it)>
- 30) Alberto Sciolari / PIC / Italy / [alb.pic@gmail.com](mailto:alb.pic@gmail.com)  
<mailto:[alb.pic@gmail.com](mailto:alb.pic@gmail.com)>
- 31) Ingrid Wunn / Verein fur Drogenpolitik / Germany /  
[ingrid.wunn@gmx.de](mailto:ingrid.wunn@gmx.de) <mailto:[ingrid.wunn@gmx.de](mailto:ingrid.wunn@gmx.de)>
- 32) Alexandra / Polish Hemp Lobby / Poland / [translator@hemplobby.info](mailto:translator@hemplobby.info)  
<mailto:[translator@hemplobby.info](mailto:translator@hemplobby.info)>
- 33) Gota / Polish Hemp Lobby / Poland / [translator@hemplobby.info](mailto:translator@hemplobby.info)

<mailto:[translator@hemplobby.info](mailto:translator@hemplobby.info)>

34) Juha Alakulppi / HPPRY / Finland / [juha.alakulppi@netti.fi](mailto:juha.alakulppi@netti.fi)

<mailto:[juha.alakulppi@netti.fi](mailto:juha.alakulppi@netti.fi)>

35) Timothy Gluckman / Eve & Rave / Germany / [timothyjake@yahoo.com](mailto:timothyjake@yahoo.com)

<mailto:[timothyjake@yahoo.com](mailto:timothyjake@yahoo.com)>

36) Sylvia Weisskopf / Zum Hinkelstein / Switzerland /

37) Bas Tielens / individual member / ENCOD / Belgium /

[bigorangedragon@hotmail.com](mailto:bigorangedragon@hotmail.com)

38) Martin Veltjen / Trekt Uw Plant / Belgium /

[martin.veltjen@pandora.be](mailto:martin.veltjen@pandora.be) <mailto:[martin.veltjen@pandora.be](mailto:martin.veltjen@pandora.be)>

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 lose 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 successful, 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.

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\*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. \*

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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.

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Thu, 12 Jul 2007 14:56:21

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Von: "encod.org" <joep@encod.org>  [Ins Adressbuch](#)  
An: "Confgroup" <eurodrug@encod.org>  
Betreff: Commissioner Hübner : "Organised civil society is to the EU what regions are to a country"

EURODRUG - INFORMATION LIST OF THE EUROPEAN COALITION FOR JUST AND EFFECTIVE DRUG POLICIES

Dear friends,

This is what the European Commission thinks of civil society nowadays:

Commissioner Hübner : "\*\*\*Organised civil society is to the EU what regions are to a country"\*\*\* \*

\*On 11<sup>th</sup> of July 2007, Ms \*\*Danuta Hübner,\*\* European Commissioner \*\*responsible for Regional Policy, presented \*\*the Fourth Report on Economic and Social Cohesion at the 437<sup>th</sup> EESC Plenary session. Next to the analysis of the progress made so far, the report, adopted by the European Commission on 30 May 2007, looks also at the main challenges to which this policy is confronted with the aim of launching a reflection on the future of European Cohesion Policy. \*

Ms Hübner stated that, while regions are the "backbones" of European governance, "organised civil society is to the EU what regions are to a country, allowing the Union to directly get in touch with citizen's expectations". The Commissioner presented to the EESC Members the key

elements of the Fourth Cohesion Report, which provides an update on the progress made towards achieving economic, social and territorial cohesion, and on the manner in which Member States' and Community's policies have contributed to it. The report gives a first assessment of the preparation for 2007-2013, based on the programming documents submitted to the Commission by Member States by end of April 2007.

Moreover, the Commission analysis looks at the new challenges which will add up to the context for regional development in the next 20-30 years - such as demography, changes in economic structures, sub-urbanisation, climate change, social exclusion or energy - and submits for a debate a series of questions on their combined impact on the policy:

how will these new challenges affect regions? what possible responses from EU Cohesion policy?

what new comparative advantages and human resources skills do European regions need to better exploit the opportunities of the globalised world?

The long-term purpose is to launch a reflection on the future of European Cohesion policy.

During a particularly fruitful debate, Mr Campli requested a more consistent integration of cohesion in other policies. Mr Ostrowski spoke on the challenge of innovation posed to the regions from Central and Eastern Europe, while Mr Derruine underlined the need to also use qualitative indicators next to GDP when assessing cohesion results, and for a better dovetailing of the Lisbon Agenda and the Sustainable Development Strategy. Ms Morrice praised the Commission's role in the peace process in Northern Ireland inquiring on the Task Force actions priorities, Ms Gauci underlined the problems of enterprises from peripheral states like Malta, and Mr Fornea asked for the Commission participation in the organisation of best practices exchanges allowing Romanian local administration to better absorb cohesion funds. Mr Kallio noted the need to lay emphasis on increased entrepreneurship and education by creating more universities, while Mr Hamro-Drotz referred to the importance of the Baltic area.

## EUROPEAN COALITION FOR JUST AND EFFECTIVE DRUG POLICIES

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\_ **\*Message sent on behalf of Mr Carel EDWARDS\*** \_ DG JLS/C2/MG/md/D(2007)9083

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> Dear Sir, Madam,

>> Several months ago you participated in the open consultation procedure regarding the Commission's Green Paper on the role of Civil Society in Drugs Policy in the European Union.

I am happy to inform you that the report of the consultation procedure as well as all written  
> contributions received by the Commission from civil society organisations, has been  
> published on the website of DG Freedom, Security and Justice

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( [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) ).

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>> You might be interested to learn that based on the open consultation procedure, the Commission has decided to set up a Civil Society Forum on Drugs, comprising of up to 30

> members whose main field of work is the drug field. The eligibility criteria for

> membership can be found in the report. Please note that the deadline for application for

> membership is\* 17 August 2007\*. An application form can be found on the website as  
well. The first meeting of the Forum is foreseen for the last quarter of 2007, the date

> of which will be communicated in due course.

>> I would like to thank you once again for your contribution.

>> With kind regards,>>> \*Carel Edwards\*

> \*EUROPEAN COMMISSION\*

> \* \_\_\_\_\_ \*

> Head of unit Drugs Policy Coordination

> DG Justice, Freedom and Security

> Mail: LX 46 01/83, BE 1049 Brussels

> tel. + 32 2 295 95 38

> \* \_\_\_\_\_ \*  
> \*email: \*\* [carel.edwards@ec.europa.eu](mailto:carel.edwards@ec.europa.eu) \*  
> <mailto:[carel.edwards@ec.europa.eu](mailto:carel.edwards@ec.europa.eu)>\*\*