

GUIDELINES FOR ENCOD REPRESENTATIVES TO MEETINGS OF THE CSF

Encod was founded in the early nineties, upon the request of the European Commission. This was after French president Mitterand had expressed his wish to develop a truly new concept of drug policy, that would be truly different from US drug policy. Encod was formed in order to serve as interlocutor on behalf of European civil society organisations in a continuous dialogue with the newly established EMCDDA. However, since the EMCDDA was founded in 1993, several requests from Encod to start up this dialogue remained unanswered. Finally, in 2004, after 10 years of lobbying the European Parliament instructed the Commission to set up this dialogue. Three years later the European Union Civil Society Forum on Drug Policy was created. Encod was invited to attend the yearly meetings of this Forum together with first 25, later 35 other organisations that were selected by the Commission.

We have always maintained that a dialogue between civil society and authorities on drug policy should contain the following elements:

1. The structure should be elaborated by representatives of authorities and civil society together.
2. The structure should respect the diversity of all existing networks and organisations.
3. Transparency and accessibility should be guaranteed in the entire process.

In the way in which the CSF has been organized so far, these three elements are lacking completely.

1. The selection of participants, the agenda setting, the preparation and reporting on the CSF sessions, the allocation of the budget reserved for the CSF have been almost exclusively decided by the European Commission, without any transparency about the motivation of these decisions.
2. As a result, organisations of drug consumers, in spite of being the citizens who are most affected by drug policies, are seriously underrepresented in the CSF. On the other hand, organisations of professionals and others with ties to either governments or the Commission itself, have been over-represented.
3. It is absolutely unclear who is represented by participating organisations in the CSF represent, who is responsible for deciding their views, what the impact of the CSF meetings has been on the policy process and what the funds that have been reserved for this dialogue have been used for.

Unless improvements are in place, the debates in the CSF cannot be considered as a serious intent to obtain a meaningful dialogue. Therefore, Encod representatives to the CSF meetings are expected to respect the following guidelines:

1. Internal transparency: report on each meeting to the Encod members (announce the meeting few weeks on beforehand, and collect suggestions to take along)
2. During the meetings, use every occasion to insist on improvements in the structure of the CSF in the organization of the forum, the selection of participants and the use of funds.
3. Report on the results of these efforts within a period of 2 weeks after the meeting.