

**ENCOD Executive Committee**  
**European Coalition for Just and Effective**  
**Drug Policies**

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## **Proposal:**

### **Discussion on current drug policy challenges at the European Parliament in the context of the past Actions plans and the future Drug Strategy**

In December 2004, the ‘Catania report’ was approved by a majority of MEP’s (Members of the European Parliament). This report proposed a radical change in EU drug policy and advocated harm reduction and a scientific and balanced approach instead of maintaining drug prohibition. It also recommended involving civil society organizations in the design and implementation of drug policy. We consider an evaluation of the current drug policy in Europe in the light of the Catania report a necessity since a rational and balanced approach is the only sensible way of tackling drug related challenges of our time. Final evaluations of the Action plan 2013-2016 and 2017-2020 that shape future Drug Strategy are upcoming and several important issues need to be addressed in its frame. The decriminalization of drug use and the possession of small quantities for personal use should be implemented in all European countries to ensure equal rights for the users. Furthermore, the depenalization of personal use in a private sphere should be guaranteed as a right to privacy and inviolability of the home. Most drug use is unproblematic and only small percentage of users develop a problematic use. However, current drug policy is based in the problematic use and doesn’t take into account tens of thousands of users who never develop a dependence. From the public health point of view, individual countries should have the capacity to offer analytical services to the general public as a measure of harm reduction, which will ensure the quality of the substances and diminish potential harmful side-effects of psychoactive substances.

Since the cannabis plant and its compounds are subject to numerous evaluations in the political and medical realm we propose a discussion on Cannabis Social Clubs (CSC) as a regulative strategy and a discussion about cannabis and driving, which is a topical issue currently in many of the European countries in the European Parliament.

## **1. Cannabis Social Clubs (CSC)**

Since 2006 ENCOD promotes the concept of Cannabis Social Clubs. These are associations of citizens who organize the cultivation of a limited amount of cannabis to satisfy their personal needs, through a closed circuit of production and distribution on a non-profit basis. CSC's now operate legally in Spain, whereas initiatives to obtain a legal status exist in several other countries. More and more Europeans discover the CSC as an appropriate tool to show how legalization could look like. It is a transparent and controlled way of the supply and demand chain that will improve the well-being of hundreds of millions of people while significantly diminishing one of the major income sources of organized crime. The concept of the Cannabis Social Clubs (CSC) deserves a thorough evaluation of theory and practice with all the stakeholders. Encod is currently working on the Guidelines for Cannabis Social Clubs with this intention.

## **2. Cannabis and driving**

Many European countries do not have evidence-based THC limits for drivers. There are many different national provisions in place that sanction driving under the influence of THC or its metabolites in the blood. The amount of THC that has to be in your blood before you are defined as being under the influence of a drug is interpreted very differently in individual countries. The quantities can vary from 1 ng up to 3 ng or more, whereas many countries don't even have a specific threshold, any level detected in blood is sanctioned. In some cases the legislation does not even agree upon, if blood or blood serum should be tested.

Numerous drivers lost their drivers license due to detected levels of THC in their blood and many people's lives have been seriously endangered or destroyed by it. Moreover, the unequal treatment of drivers on cannabis and drivers on alcohol leads to severe consequences for the society. Without putting traffic at risk or even causing an accident these people don't just lose their driving license, but their job, or their company and their dignity. Such measures do not punish any real threat to road safety. The level of the thresholds of THC in blood, the penalties for it, and the different strategies used in individual European countries to tackle this issue need a thorough evaluation and a uniform approach should be considered based on equality and science based evidence.

## **About ENCOD**

In 1993, following the request of the European Commission, 14 organizations working in the field of drugs founded the European Coalition for Just and Effective Drug Policies. During two decades, ENCOD grew into a platform of about 150 members, organizations, companies and citizens who want to represent a voice at the United Nations, the European Union and on the national and local level. Recently various regions and countries all over the world have started to implement changes to drug policy. But how will future drug policies look like? Will practice and science based evidence be taken into account?

ENCOD advocates for fair drug policies respecting the rights of users. Our approach is threefold: societal, informational, and regulatory. We collaborate with various European initiatives that protect the rights of people who use drugs and position ourselves within the European and international dialogue.