



# THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN DRUG POLICY:

BRUSSELS, 5TH DECEMBER 2019  
SEMINAR REPORT



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Civil Society Forum on Drugs (CSFD) held a seminar on “*The Future of European Drug Policy*” in the European Parliament, Brussels, on 5th December 2019. The key aims of the seminar were:

1. highlighting why drug policy is a key issue for Europe
2. underlining the need for MEPs and European policy makers to keep a focus on drug policy as an important issue, and,
3. helping MEPs understand and navigate the implications of a new phase of European and international drug policy.

The seminar was attended by 24 CSFD members, as well as representatives from the European Commission (EC), European Council, European Presidency (then Finland, as well as Croatia as the upcoming Presidency), and 7 MEP representatives and assistants from, United Kingdom, Portugal and Germany. After the seminar, a Debriefing Session was organised to inform the rest of the members of the CSFD about the contents of the seminar.

This seminar was a valuable event which not only served as a mechanism for initial contact between CSFD and the European Parliament, but also highlighted a number of ways forward for further engagement. In particular, it set out the CSFD's three calls to action for MEPs:

- For MEPs to **exercise their political oversight**, particularly in the context of the EU Drugs Strategy and external actions through public positions and resolutions. Possible strategic actions in this area include passing a resolution recommending the adoption of a new EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2027, and condemning human rights violations committed in the name of drug control.
- For MEPs to **exercise their budgetary authority**, particularly in the context of MEPs' negotiations of the multiannual financial framework (MFF) for 2021-2027 and of the EU yearly budget. Possible strategic actions in this regard include strong language on the need to retain/increase funding for evidence-based drug policy services, research and advocacy in any resolution supporting a renewed drug strategy and action plan, and ensuring that funding is once again ringfenced for drug-related projects within the upcoming MFF and associated annual budgets.
- For MEPs to **exercise their democratic power**. Possible strategic actions in this regard include creating an informal group of MEPs interested in European drug policy to track key developments in European drug policy, liaise with the European Commission on the drafting, adoption and implementation of the EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2027, and enable more regular dialogues with the CSFD.

# THE CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM ON DRUGS

The Civil Society Forum on Drugs (CSFD) is an [expert group of the European Commission](#) that was created in 2007 on the basis of the [Commission Green Paper](#) on the role of civil society in drugs policy in the EU. Its purpose is to provide a broad platform for a structured dialogue between the Commission and European civil society organisations working in the area of drug policy. The CSFD is consistent with the [EU Strategy on Drugs 2013-2020](#) and the new [Action Plan on Drugs 2017-2020](#) both of which require the active and meaningful participation and involvement of civil society organisations (CSOs) in the development and implementation of drug policies, at national, EU and international level. Its membership comprises CSOs from across Europe and representing a variety of fields of drug policy, and a variety of stances within those fields. Membership is renewed every three years, and the last call was in March 2018. A list of current members is available [on the CSFD website](#).

In carrying out its work, the CSFD is supported by the European Commission both directly and through a project which is operated by a consortium of CSFD members. As part of the CSFD project, planned activities support the work of each of the CSFD working groups, one of which is focused on the [EU and international drug policy](#). As part of its ongoing work, and supported by the EC through the CSFD project, and by the Ministerio de Sanidad, Consumo y Bienestar Social (Spain), the workgroup held the seminar “*The Future of European Drug Policy*” in the European Parliament, Brussels, on 5th December 2019. This seminar was co-hosted by Maria Matias, MEP (Portugal) of the Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left.

## BACKGROUND TO THE SEMINAR

The CSFD has strong contacts with staff working on drug policy in the European Commission structures, as well as with the member states’ civil service structures through regular meetings with the horizontal working group on drugs (HDG), and it is mainly through these avenues that CSFD provides its inputs into the European drug policy landscape. However, the CSFD has not historically had such close contacts, in an organized fashion, with European Parliamentarians. While individual CSFD members might be very politically active, there was no history of the CSFD engaging with MEPs in a structured way.

In addition, 2020 is an important year for drug policy in the context of the European Union. The current Drugs Strategy runs to the end of 2020, and is currently being evaluated. Equally, the current multiannual financial framework is currently being finalized by the European Parliament for the years 2021-2027 an activity which is taking place against the backdrop of Brexit and the attendant uncertainty that that process brings. Finally, European Parliament elections were held in 2019, and the new and returning MEPs have now taken up their roles in the European Parliament. This is taking place at a time when there are significant challenges to the role of, and shrinking space for, civil society in some EU countries.

In this context, the CSFD wished to reach out to the new MEPs, to stress the importance of a



continued focus on and support for drug policy in the European environment in the coming years, as well as highlighting the value that civil society engagement brings to policy processes.

Prior to the seminar, the members of the working group produced a [policy paper for MEPs](#), and members reached out to MEPs from their own country, inviting attendance and seeking engagement more generally on the issue of drug policy. Given the limited space in the meeting room in the European Parliament, CSFD attendance was restricted to preregistered members of the working group. However, a follow up debriefing session was organized for all CSFD members following the event. In addition, individual members of the CSFD arranged private sessions with MEPs or their staff later in the day.

The seminar had the following objectives:

- **Highlighting** why drug policy is a key issue for Europe.
- **Underlining** the need for MEPs and European policy makers to keep a focus on drug policy as an important issue.
- **Helping** MEPs understand and navigate the implications of a new phase of European and international drug policy.



# THE SEMINAR

The seminar was attended by 24 CSFD members, as well as representatives from the European Commission (EC), European Council, European Presidency (both Finland as the sitting Presidency and Croatia as the incoming Presidency), and 7 MEP representatives and assistants from, United Kingdom, Portugal and Germany.

The seminar was structured into an opening session followed by four thematic sessions as follows:

- Opening Session.
- SESSION 1: Challenges in drug policy in Europe: The role of the Parliament.
- SESSION 2: Europe and global drug policy: Key opportunities for the European Parliament.
- SESSION 3: Civil society cooperation with the EU: Strengths, ongoing challenges and options for the future.
- SESSION 4: Conclusions.

Below is an overview of some of the key points made by speakers and delegates during the seminar. Where speakers used PowerPoint presentations, these have been archived and are [available at this link](#).



*Floriana Sipala (European Commission) Celine Ruiz (European Commission)*



## Opening session

The seminar was opened by Floriana Sipala, Head of Unit of Organised Crime and Drugs Policy (Directorate General for Migration and Home Affairs, European Commission), whose opening comments noted the importance of the moment in relation to drug policy in the European context, as well as thanking all those present at the seminar and all those who had worked to make it possible, including the CSFD, MEPs and the Finnish Presidency. Ms. Sipala stressed the challenges of dealing with the drugs issue at a European policy level, as well as the need for a strong, evidence based, human-centred and balanced strategy to address these challenges. She noted that the current strategy was currently being evaluated and reminded participants that their input in the evaluation process was important. She also pointed to the very good work that was ongoing in the European context, including by agencies like the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA).

## Session 1: Challenges in Drug Policy in Europe: The Role of the Parliament



*Laurène Collard (Federation Addiction-France), Ms. Alexandra Phillips (UK MEP)*

*Adrià Cots Fernandez (Harm Reduction International-United Kingdom), Celine Ruiz (European Commission).*

The first session featured a presentation from Danilo Ballotta, EMCDDA and was moderated by Laurène Collard, [Federation Addiction](#) and Chairperson of the CSFD.

Mr. Ballotta presented key data on drugs in Europe from the EMCDDA's [Drug Markets Report 2019](#), noting that the European drugs market was worth in excess of 30 billion euro annually, a significant amount which had far reaching consequences including on wider criminal activity and societal impact as well as on the legal economy and on existing institutions. Key facts included:

- Cannabis accounts for almost 40% of the total retail drugs market, and it is estimated that 1% of adults use drugs daily. Cannabis purity as measured by THC content has risen sharply in the last decade, but price has largely remained the same.

- Cocaine accounts for 31% of the total retail drugs market, with over 4 million adults reporting last year cocaine use. In 2017, cocaine was implicated in over 1200 deaths, with almost 120 tonnes consumed in Europe each year. Cocaine purity has risen in the last decade and prices have dropped; there is also more violence and concerns regarding the level of corruption now associated with the cocaine market in Europe.
- Heroin accounts for 25% of the market, and opioids were implicated in over 6,500 deaths in Europe in 2017. Recent years have seen some changes in production patterns with evidence that labs inside the EU are synthesising heroin from morphine.
- Amphetamine, methamphetamine and MDMA account for approximately 5% of the retail drug market. Largely produced inside the EU (notably in Belgium and the Netherlands for MDMA/amphetamine and Czech Republic for methamphetamine), a major concern is chemical waste products associated with production methods – it is estimated that there are approximately 7,000-11,000 of waste produced annually, which is both hazardous to health and difficult to clean up.

From an interventions perspective, there are 1.2 million people receiving drug dependence treatment in Europe, with over 650,000 receiving opioid substitution treatment. As a route of administration, injecting seems to be on the decline in Europe and, coupled with good access to needle and syringe programmes for people who do inject, there has been a drop in rates of new HIV cases over the last decade. However, there are still many challenges, including the fact that:

- Many people still equate information provision with evidence-based prevention, which it is not. There are many good resources available through EMCDDA which can provide policy makers with evidence-based information on prevention.
- Blood-borne viruses remain a serious issue with barriers to testing and uptake of treatment in relation to hepatitis C virus (HCV), in circumstances where 8 in 14 EU countries with national data show HCV antibody prevalence rates in excess of 50% among people who use drugs.
- Worryingly, drug-related deaths continue to rise. In this context, increasing access to take-home naloxone is critical. There also remains a certain taboo around drug consumption rooms as a policy response even though the evidence of effectiveness is now clear in the EU.

In summary, what we see in the European drug market underscores the importance of continuing to prioritise this issue. Drugs are more widely and cheaply available than ever; the EU is itself a producer and exporter of drugs; and there is increasing violence and corruption associated with the drugs market.

Following the presentation, Ms. Collard opened the matter to the floor for discussion and questions. During this part of the session, the group discussed a number of issues which could be useful for policy makers to consider including:

- The need for, and challenges in, providing proper access to services in high-risk settings such as prisons.



- The challenges in rapidly increasing naloxone coverage, particularly in contexts where legislative change might be required.
- Given the huge challenges generally in addressing drug use across Europe, whether actions can be undertaken ahead of the curve to tackle the problem, rather than constantly 'playing catch up'. Here it was noted that there could be improvements on both the supply and demand side of the market – with improvements to be made in terms of treatment and harm reduction, as well as targeting the assets of organised crime groups.

Ms. Collard then gave a brief presentation, contextualising what had just been heard with the work of the CSFD. Ms. Collard gave an overview of the CSFD, noting its role as an expert group to the European Commission in the area of drug policy, as well as its organisation into working groups focused on particular thematic areas:

- The EU Action Plan and Drug Strategy.
- The EU and international drug policy.
- Civil society involvement with national policies.
- Minimum quality standards for demand reduction.

She thanked the EC for its support, both in general and also through the EC-funded projects which are supporting the work of the CSFD and its members.



*Danilo Ballotta (EMCDDA) Laurène Collard (Federation Addiction-France)*

## Session 2: Europe and global drug policy: key opportunities for the European Parliament

The second session was introduced and moderated by MEP Alexandra Louise Rosenfield Phillips (Group of Greens/European Free Alliance, UK) and featured presentations from Peter Sarosi, [Rights Reporter Foundation](#) (RRF), Lucia Goberna, [Dianova International](#), Elina Kotovirta, Finnish Presidency of the EU, and Adria Cots Fernandez, [Harm Reduction International](#).



*Marie Nougier (IDPC), Laurène Collard (Federation Addiction) Peter Sarosi (Rights Reporter Foundation) Lucia Goberna (Dianova International) Adrià Cots Fernandez (Harm Reduction International).*

Ms. Alexandra Phillips MEP opened the session, thanking members for the invitation to moderate and participate. She commended the support for the CSFD at a European level and noted her support for this work and the importance of including civil society voices in policy processes. Ms. Phillips noted the significant harm that the drugs issue was causing to communities and to the environment, and highlighted the need for a new strategy for the period post -2020; underscoring that it would be a significant lost opportunity not to continue work in this area. Ms. Phillips also noted that policies needed to be grounded in reality and take on board that attempts over many decades to suppress illicit drug markets had not worked. There was a need, therefore, for a focus on social inclusion and support in EU communities – with policies directed towards keeping youth and communities safe, as well as ensuring that people who use drugs are also safe.

Peter Sarosi, RRF, continued the session with a presentation looking back at the past 10 years of global drug policy and the role of the EU, noting the following key points:

- One decade ago, the [Political Declaration on drugs adopted at the 2009](#) High Level Segment committed states to ‘measurably reduce the scale of the illicit drug market in the next 10 years’. This objective has not been achieved.

- The 2016 “*United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Drugs*” (UNGASS) on drugs and its [Outcome Document](#) focused less on eradication and more concerned with a health and rights-based approach. However, there are still many contentious areas between states at the global level, including:
  - The continued criminalisation of people who use drugs for offences related solely to personal drug use.
  - The need to adopt a comprehensive health approach, including harm reduction.
  - The lack of proportionality of sentencing for drugs offences, and the need to abolish the death penalty.
  - The need for an approach to drug laws which ensures adequate access to essential medicines.
- The [EU common position for the UNGASS](#) was strong and progressive, with a focus on:
  - Human rights.
  - Abolishing the death penalty.
  - Civil society involvement.
  - Access to opioid substitution treatment.
  - Access to essential medicines.
  - Alternative development.

Following this presentation, Lucia Goberna, Dianova International (Spain), gave a presentation on recent international agreements in drug policy, highlighting the importance of the current moment in international drug policy. Key points noted include:

- The UN Chief Executive Board of Coordination adopted a UN System [common position](#) on drugs in 2018, which is a progressive document, focused on efforts to leave no one behind, joint inter-agency activities, and recognising the need for the UN to speak with one voice, ensuring system-wide coherence and coordination.
- The key themes of the common position include the protection of health, human rights and sustainable development out of which, the following were highlighted: harm reduction, decriminalization, access to controlled medicines, alignment of drug control policies to human rights, a recovery-oriented continuum of care services and the participation of civil society.
- The challenges include ensuring that this vision is reflected at the operational level, and that the common position is well publicized and communicated. In this regard, the European Parliament could play a role, such as:
  - Ensuring that the document and its principles are reflected in the next EU Drug Strategy.
  - Formally endorsing the common position to help facilitate its implementation at the national level.
- In 2019, the Ministerial Segment at the 62<sup>nd</sup> Commission on Narcotic Drugs, and its [Ministerial Declaration](#) took stock of the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action implementation and defined future commitments. It was a critical moment for member states to define the next decade of UN drug policy and it was marked by great polarization between member states. The [EU played a leading role](#) – speaking with a single voice, emphasizing the importance of sustainable development, human rights and the protection of health.
- The Ministerial Declaration recognized the “*persistent and emerging challenges related to*



*the World Drug Problem*” which describe serious shortcomings of drug control efforts and its implications on health and human rights. This has resulted in the planning of a yearly session until the mid-term review takes place in 2024, where CND will evaluate the progress made in all the identified challenges.

- Drug policy is, like other areas, at a moment of extreme polarization and increasing tensions, and policy makers must seize the opportunity of the new cycle in drug policy within the EU to forge a way forward.

Elina Kotovirta, then holding the EU Presidency (Finland), continued the session by sharing some insights on the EU priorities in international drug policy, noting that:

- At the start of her career, civil society were not broadly included in policy discussions, and it was a good thing that this had changed. The CSFD could and did provide valuable input to groups like the “*Horizontal Working Party on Drugs*” (HDG), and this was very helpful.
- As with all policy areas, drug policy is not one in which there is a consistent international consensus – there are always opposing views, and the challenge is to be able to move forward and build better policy responses within the constraints of the structures of the multilateral system.
- Such a multidisciplinary and multilateral approach is good and is needed to tackle the issues that drug policies need to tackle – new and emerging challenges like NPS are common to all jurisdictions.
- Despite the challenges, the EU priorities always seek to be balanced and strong on key issues that are not consensus issues across the international community, such as the inclusion of civil society in policy processes, alternative development, human rights, proportionality of sentencing and the abolition of the death penalty.



*Elina Kotovirta (EU Presidency Finland)*

Adria Cots Fernandez, Harm Reduction International (UK), continued the session with a presentation on the implications of international drug policy for the European Parliament, noting the following key points:

- Drug policy has typically not been a strong focus of the European Parliament (EP). For example, there is no EP committee on drug policy, no EP delegation to the CND and no EP rapporteur on drug policy.

- However, the EP should take a greater interest, not least because of the impact drug policies have on human rights around the world. In this context, the EP is a credible voice in the human rights community, and can help in ensuring drug issues are conceptualised as human rights issues. Further, the EP has the legal and political power to influence other EU actors, such as the Commission and the Council.
- Within this context, there were a number of concrete actions the incoming EP could focus on. For example, Parliamentarians could:
  - Approve a resolution in favour of a new EU drugs strategy, which would set a fresh policy record based on the 2016 UNGASS Outcome Document, and the 2018 UN Common Position, as well as influence European Council discussions on the EU drugs strategy and form a basis for future resolutions on specific drug policy issues.
  - Oversee the European Commission's decision to maintain the Philippines' GSP+ trade preference, particularly as the Philippines' media will pick up on the European Parliament's actions. This would also provide an opportunity to coordinate with local human rights organizations.

Following this input, Ms. Phillips MEP opened the session to the floor. In the limited time available, the conversation focused on the various channels and groups through which a drug policy agenda could be progressed in practical terms in the European Parliament. A number of structures were identified depending on the particular focus of the issue, with the DROI, ENVI and LIBE Committees all identified as potential areas for progression.



*Amish Laxmidas (UNITE Global Parliamentarians Network to End Infectious Diseases) Celine Ruiz (European Commission) Monica Barzanti (San Patrignano)*

### Session 3: Civil society cooperation with the EU: Strengths, ongoing challenges and options for the future

The third session was introduced and moderated by Amish Laxmidas, [UNITE Global Parliamentarians Network to End Infectious Diseases](#) (Portugal) and featured presentations from Celine Ruiz, European Commission and Monica Barzanti, [San Patrignano](#) (Italy).

Mr. Laxmidas opened the session by briefly introducing the work of UNITE – a global network of parliamentarians focused on ending infectious diseases. Within this, he noted the relationship with drug policy and also the importance of the European Parliament, given the great political impact the EP has, as well as the importance of civil society involvement in policy processes. Drug policy brings broad challenges, as does policy in the area of infectious diseases, and these issues can only be adequately addressed by all working together. In particular, parties in the policy process should seek to make policy resources as accessible as possible to help drive both public and political support, in as many languages as possible to broaden the reach.

Following Mr. Laxmidas, Celine Ruiz spoke briefly about the European Commission's experience of collaborating with the CSFD, noting the following key points:

- As other speakers noted, it is always important to work together and this is particularly true at the current moment, given the many challenges facing the EU.
- The Commission has long recognized the problems posed by drugs and has supported many activities over the years through programmes such as the Justice Programme. These programmes always attract many applications, and are very competitive. In the context of the CSFD, the EC is proud of this type of work which has brought great added value.
- The CSFD has been active in providing briefing papers on a range of policy issues, inputs for third country dialogues, inputs on the Annual Report Questionnaire. These inputs are always welcome and very helpful. It is positive that the CSFD is strengthening links with Parliamentarians. The EC has had very good experiences collaborating with civil society, particularly in the context of preparations for the 2019 Ministerial Segment.
- The coming months are going to be very busy for the Commission in the context of the evaluation of existing strategy and, hopefully, elaborating a new drug policy for the European Union, for which the contributions of a wide range of stakeholders are important.

Continuing the session, Monica Barzanti, San Patrignano (Italy), gave a presentation highlighting some examples of collaboration between the CSFD and the EU at the global level, and noted the following key points:

- The 2006 Green paper on the role of civil society in drug policy in Europe was the first attempt to structure the dialogue with European civil society organisations (CSOs) in the drugs field. From this, the CSFD developed, with its role focused on supporting policy formulation, implementation and evaluation through practical advice, ensuring an effective two-way information flow and stimulating networking among civil society organizations.
- Since 2013, the CSFD has regularly submitted recommendations to the European Commission and to the Horizontal Working Group on Drugs, outlining its positions and priorities.



The CSFD is proud of its good working relationship with these entities and is pleased to note that many of its recommendations and priorities have been included in EU positions and promoted at the UN level, including:

- Civil society hearings at the CND.
  - Creation of a Civil Society Task Force contributing to the UNGASS and the Ministerial Segment in 2019, where 35 CSOs were selected according to geographical and thematic areas, including two members for Europe coming from the CSFD.
  - The inclusion of some specific wording and inputs on cross-cutting issues, such as human rights, public health, social inclusion, gender sensitivity and development.
- To take some specific examples, during the preparation process for the UNGASS, the CSFD regularly shared written recommendations with the EC and the HDG, and during the negotiations on the UNGASS Outcome document, the EC asked the CSFD to submit recommendations on some concrete aspects of drug policy, such as on the abolition of the death penalty, and on the proportionality of sentencing for drugs offences. It is important to note that the inclusion of CSOs in the UNGASS process was strongly supported by the EC, securing civil society speakers during the Plenary Sessions and at each UNGASS roundtable.
- Similarly, there was a significant amount of collaboration and input during the follow up period from the UNGASS and in the lead up to the 2019 Ministerial Segment. In 2018 and 2019, the CSFD produced recommendations for the modalities of the 2019 Ministerial Segment, and its draft declaration, which were aligned with the seven thematic chapters of the UNGASS Outcome Document, and advocating for civil society participation, such as the inclusion of civil society representatives in governments' official delegations at the Ministerial Segment and the organization of a civil society hearing ahead of the Segment, which took place in early 2019.
- During the 2019 CND, meeting was organized among delegates from the CSFD, the Romanian Presidency, the incoming Finnish Presidency, the EC, HDG members and the EMCDDA. The negotiation status of specific resolutions was presented and discussed, and CSFD inputs and recommendations on each topic were noted and welcomed. The EU and CSFD delegations also agreed on importance of issues like the UNGASS Outcome Document implementation, data collection, and the commitment to work with civil society. This meeting has been held each year at the CND over the past three to four years.
- It was highlighted how the CSFD is active, regularly working with the EC, HDG and the Council, but is looking at more ways to engage directly with the Parliament. This seminar was an opportunity for MEPs to have a chance to connect with national and international experts able to provide inputs coming directly from the field, bringing in the concerns and voices of grassroot organizations and the needs of affected populations. She concluded that close collaboration with CSOs reinforce the EU leadership role in promoting human rights, health, SDGs achievement and civil society engagement in drug policy.

Mr. Laxmidas moderated a brief discussion from the floor, in which delegates discussed the crosscutting and multi-thematic approach that drug policy demanded, and in which it was noted that the EC worked across various Directorates-General (DGs) on such thematic issues.

## Session 4: Conclusions and recommendations

The fourth session focused on providing conclusions from the morning's discussions, with a presentation by Marie Nougier, International Drug Policy Consortium (UK), and Chair of CSFD's working group on EU and international drug policy. Ms. Nougier gave a brief presentation on the future of European drug policy, with a call for action for MEPs. The main points included:

- Noting that this seminar marked the first policy engagement between the CSFD and MEPs. As such, it was an opportunity to open a dialogue with interested MEPs on European drug policy issues, to highlight key challenges faced in European drug policy and to identify opportunities for action.
- Setting out the CSFD's three calls to action for MEPs:
  - For MEPs to **exercise their political oversight**, particularly in the context of the EU Drugs Strategy and external actions through public positions and resolutions. Possible strategic actions in this area include passing a resolution recommending the adoption of a new EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2027, and condemning human rights violations committed in the name of drug control.
  - For MEPs to **exercise their budgetary authority**, particularly in the context of MEPs' negotiations of the multiannual financial framework (MFF) for 2021-2027 and of the EU yearly budget. Possible strategic actions in this regard include strong language on the need to retain/increase funding for evidence-based drug policy services, research and advocacy in any resolution supporting a renewed drug strategy and action plan, and ensuring that funding is once again ringfenced for drug-related projects within the upcoming MFF and associated annual budgets.
  - For MEPs to **exercise their democratic power**. Possible strategic actions in this regard include creating an informal group of MEPs interested in European drug policy to track key developments in European drug policy, liaise with the European Commission on the drafting, adoption and implementation of the EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2027, and enable more regular dialogues with the CSFD.

The seminar concluded with brief concluding statements from Marisa Matias MEP, who co-organised the event, and Jasna Karačić, Permanent Representative of Croatia to the European Union, the then upcoming EU Presidency.

Ms. Matias MEP thanked all the delegates for their attendance and contribution and stressed the importance of drug policy to her office. She gave her apologies for being unable to attend for the entire event, and noted that she would welcome further contact from delegates in relation to civil society in the context of European drug policy and relations with the European Parliament.

Ms. Karačić noted the value that the incoming Croatian Presidency placed on civil society involvement, and looked forward to continuing to collaborate in the future. She highlighted some of the priorities the incoming presidency had in this area, including focusing on supply and demand reduction, the CND and on the issue of minimum quality standards for demand reduction.



*Ms Marisa Matias (Portuguese MEP) Jose Queiroz (APDES)*

On behalf of the CSFD, Laurène Collard thanked all of the delegates and speakers for their contribution to the seminar, and welcomed the beginning of new links between the CSFD and MEPs.

## The Debriefing Session

As noted previously, numbers were restricted for the seminar itself, given the available meeting space in the European Parliament. For this reason, a debriefing session was organized for CSFD members who were unable to attend. In total 29 members participated. This session was led by Marie Nougier, and focused on briefing CSFD members on what took place, reflecting on what could have been done better or differently, and on the next steps, including meetings with MEPs and future advocacy activities. Regarding the event itself, an overview of key discussion areas was given by Lucia Goberna.

A number of key points were noted during the session:

- All who attended felt it was a very worthwhile endeavour. Building relationships with Parliamentarians was a positive development in the work of CSFD, and the support and inputs of the MEPs Marisa Matias and Alexandra Phillips were noted and welcomed.
- All agreed that holding the meeting in the European Parliament had contributed to the success of event, as it made the meeting more visible to MEPs. It was also noted that now that initial contact had been made, the CSFD could also focus on making contact with MEPs in settings outside the European Parliament such as at other seminars highlighting other drug-related work. The *pros* and *cons* of this approach were noted, including noting that holding national-level meetings with MEPs outside the EP could bring added value as these would be more likely to engage MEPs on national issues, whereas meetings discussing



broader European issues like the seminar are more likely to be successful if held in the Parliamentary setting. It was also noted that there could be strategic value in planning meetings around international events that were already taking place, and hold visits to drug services to make matters more concrete.

- The value of external speakers in helping to contextualise issues from different perspectives for MEPs was also noted, as was the importance of having a clear objective in building relationships – it was helpful to be able to have a clear view of the CSFD’s position and calls to action. In terms of organising future events, identifying high-level speakers that could motivate MEPs to contribute could be of great value.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES AND NEXT STEPS

The participants then discussed the various calls for action presented in the CSFD policy briefing paper and at the seminar:

- Report of the seminar to be distributed in January 2020.
- Follow-up seminar with MEPs planned for late-2020 or early-2021: it was proposed that this seminar would involve 30 MEPs and 10 CSFD members for 2021. The theme for the seminar would be decided at a later stage. This activity is planned in the new CSFD project funded by the EC.
- More regular communications between the CSFD and MEPs on drug policy issues.

The potential of using other project activities as a means of building stranger relationships was also noted. The possibility of collaborating further with UNITE on areas of mutual interest was also discussed and supported.

As a more immediate follow up, the need to follow up on the calls to action that were set out in the policy briefing paper and seminar was noted, and the possibility of pairing these with a draft resolution to make the action as accessible as possible for interested MEPs – discussions on how best to make this possible was discussed during the debriefing session.

Finally, a number of CSFD members had engaged directly with the offices of MEPs from their countries at the margins of the seminar, and these were also helpful in terms of engagement and building relationships. These meetings included:

- Irish CSFD members met with representatives from the offices of 4 Irish MEPs.
- Italian CSFD members met with MEP Pierfrancesco Majorino, who already expressed an interest in promoting drug policy within the European Parliament.
- Portuguese CSFD members met with MEP Marisa Matias.

# CONCLUSIONS

The members of the CSFD work hard to promote the value of civil society involvement in drug policy processes, as well as the need for strong health centred and humane drug policies. This seminar was a first attempt to build relationships in a formal way with European Parliamentarians on these issues, at a moment when Europe is facing significant challenges. We are very grateful to everyone – MEPs, the European Commission, European Council, EU Presidencies, EMCDDA, UNITE, the members of the CSFD working group on international drug policy, and the partners in the CSFD project – who all contributed to make this event possible. It was a valuable event which not only served as a mechanism for initial contact between CSFD and the European Parliament, but also highlighted a number of ways forward for further engagement.

The CSFD thanks its members for the photos featured in this report, including Marie Nougier, Oriol Esculies and Lola Capdepón Balaguer. Design by István Gábor Takács, Rights Reporter Foundation.

The Civil Society Forum on Drugs (CSFD) is an expert group of the European Commission that was created in 2007 on the basis of the Commission Green Paper on the role of civil society in drugs policy in the EU. Its purpose is to provide a broad platform for a structured dialogue between the Commission and the European civil society which supports drug policy formulation and implementation through practical advice. The CSFD is consistent with the EU Strategy on Drugs 2013-2020 and the new Action Plan on Drugs 2017-2020 both of which require the active and meaningful participation and involvement of civil society organisations (CSOs) in the development and implementation of drug policies, at national, EU and international level. Its membership comprises 45 CSOs from across Europe and representing a variety of fields of drug policy, and a variety of stances within those fields. Membership is renewed every three years, and the last call was in March 2018. List of CSFD members:

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| 1. ABD - Associació Benestar i Desenvolupament             | 27. IDPC - International Drug Policy Consortium           |
| 2. AFEW International                                      | 28. INPUD - International Network of People who use Drugs |
| 3. AIDES   | 29. IREFREA - Instituto Europeo de Estudios en Prevención |
| 4. Ana Liffey Drug Project                                 | 30. MAT - Magyar Addiktológiai Társaság                   |
| 5. APDES - Agência Piaget para o Desenvolvimento           | 31. Médicos del Mundo España                              |
| 6. APH - Association Proyecto Hombre                       | 32. PARSEC Consortium                                     |
| 7. ARAS - Romanian Association Against AIDS                | 33. Polish Drug Policy Network                            |
| 8. Citywide Drugs Crisis Campaign                          | 34. Prekursor Foundation for Social Policy                |
| 9. De Regenboog Groep                                      | 35. Proslavi Oporavak                                     |
| 10. Dianova International                                  | 36. Romanian Harm Reduction Network                       |
| 11. Diogenis Drug Policy Dialogue                          | 37. Rights Reporter Foundation                            |
| 12. EAPC - European Association for Palliative Care        | 38. San Patrignano  |
| 13. EATG - European AIDS Treatment Group                   | 39. SANANIM   |
| 14. ECAD - European Cities Network for Drug Free Societies | 40. SDF - Scottish Drugs Forum                            |
| 15. EFSU - European Forum for Urban Security               | 41. UNAD  |
| 16. ENLACE   | 42. UTRIP   |
| 17. EURAD  | 43. WFAD - World Federation Against Drugs                 |
| 18. EuroTC - European Treatment Centres for Drug Addiction | 44. WOCAD   |
| 19. EUSPR - European Society for Prevention Research       | 45. YODA - Youth Organisations for Drug Action            |
| 20. FAD - Fundación de Ayuda contra la Drogadicción        |   |
| 21. Federation Addiction                                   |   |
| 22. FEDITO BXL   |   |
| 23. Forum Droghe   |   |
| 24. FUNDACIÓN ATENEA                                       |   |
| 25. GAT - Grupo de Ativistas em Tratamentos                |   |
| 26. HRI - Harm Reduction International                     |   |

