

Dear Members of the European Parliament,

We are writing to you on behalf of the European Civil Society Forum on Drugs (CSFD), the European Commission expert group on drug related issues, consisting of 45 members representing national organizations and regional networks in Europe.

We understand that the European Commission President candidate will present priorities for the European Parliament at the next plenary session and that ENVI (Environment, Public Health and Food Safety) Committee will discuss priorities on 22 -23 July.

With this letter, the CSFD ask for your support and commitment to call for the **inclusion of drug-related problems as priority in the list of joint health priorities**; and for the **development of a new EU Drug Strategy and Action Plan** beyond 2020, building upon the successes of the current EU Drug Strategy (2013-2020) and EU Drug Action Plan (2017-2020).

1) Recognising drug-related problems as a health priority for the EU

Drug problems are complex and linked to different policy areas (e.g. health, social inclusion, justice, security, development and human rights, among others). The most relevant policy area for drug prevention, risk and harm reduction, treatment, care and recovery programmes remains the EU's Health Policy.

These interventions continue to be direly needed. According to the [United Nations](#), while one in eight people who inject drugs globally are living with HIV, over half are infected by hepatitis C. Unfortunately, access to evidence-based risk and harm reduction services to tackle these preventable infections remains limited, [including in Europe](#). This is despite the fact that recent advances in the medications available to treat hepatitis C have made the possibility of eliminating the virus an attainable goal. Also of major concern is the number of drug use-related deaths in the EU, having reached 8,238 in 2017, according to the [latest estimates](#) of the European Monitoring Centre on Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA).

In the past eight years, promoting a comprehensive range of health and social services for people who use drugs, including the provision of risk and harm reduction services, has been at the forefront of the EU drug policy – and the region remains a model of effectiveness and evidence-based policies for the rest of the world, in particular in a context of renewed 'war on drugs' approaches in various parts of the world (e.g. in the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Brazil or Colombia).

The CSFD is concerned that drug-related problems and the health and social risks and harms related to drug use may not be included in the new priorities and related programmes of the EU. We urge you to consider drug-related problems as a key aspect of the future EU Health Policy. This is also important in relation to the achievement of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to which the EU and its Member States committed. Indeed, a number of the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDG) relate directly to drug problems. For example, Goal 3.3 focuses on ending the epidemics of infectious diseases, such as HIV/AIDS and viral hepatitis, while Goal 3.5 seeks to enhance the prevention and treatment of drug use problems. In its 2019 report, the EMCDDA itself highlighted the 'need to scale up the provision of prevention, testing and

treatment as a critical objective to achieving the public health goals which are adopted in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’.

2) Elaborating a new EU Drug Strategy and Drug Action Plan post-2020

The current [EU Drug Strategy](#) and [EU Drug Action Plan](#) clearly indicate the importance of a balanced, integrated and evidence-based European approach, building on the knowledge, skills and capacities of civil society organisations and health and social service providers. The CSFD has welcomed, and contributed to the drafting of, both of these policy documents. The CSFD is also contributing to their implementation on the ground.

The development of a new EU Drug Strategy and Action Plan beyond 2020 would ensure that the European Commission builds on the legacy and successes of the current EU drug policy. More specifically, it would:

- Ensure that drug-related issues remain an integral part of any future EU policy, in particular in the areas of health, social and security policies
- Support and complement national policies, and provide EU Member States with a framework for coordinated and joint actions, including on the current challenges in the area of drug policy and practice (e.g. drug-related deaths, new psychoactive substances and others)
- Provide instruments and guidance towards a balanced, integrated and evidence-based European approach grounded in human rights principles, building on the knowledge, skills and capacities of civil society and health and social service providers
- Continue to speak with one voice in international forums related to drug policy, as a display of leadership and unity in the promotion of drug policies grounded in evidence, health and human rights, in line with the 2016 [Outcome Document](#) of the UN General Assembly Special Session on drugs.

The CSFD hopes that you will support our call for prioritizing drug-related problems in the future EU Health Policy, by including it as one of the health priorities of the ENVI Committee, and by supporting the development of a new EU Drug Strategy and Action Plan for the coming years.

We remain at your disposal for any questions you may have and are ready to support endeavors to ensure that the EU Health Policy remains inclusive, by leaving no one behind and supporting marginalized populations and their specific needs.

Susanna Ronconi

Associazione Forum Droghe
On behalf of the EU Civil Society Forum on Drugs

Florence, 19th July 2019

**forum
droghe**

www.fuoriluogo.it
segreteria@forumdroghe.it