

January 17, 2024

Mr. Albert Batlle

Third Deputy Mayor's Office

City Hall of Barcelona

Plaça de Sant Jaume, 1

08002 Barcelona, Spain

Subject: Supporting the Regulation of Cannabis Social Clubs in Barcelona

Dear Mr. Batlle,

This letter intends to address the concerning statements you have made regarding Cannabis Social Clubs (CSCs). The explicit intention to close all CSCs and consider them "a model we do not want in our city" is a position that is regressive and unaligned with the pivotal advancements in drug policy currently taking place worldwide. The CSC model was founded in Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia, 22 years ago. These locations showcase an innovative, health-focused, and community-oriented approach to cannabis consumption.

Originating as a civil society initiative to create an alternative to the prohibitionist regime, CSCs prioritize human rights and public health above criminalization. Operating as non-profits, these clubs enable legal-age members to consume cannabis collectively, distancing themselves from the underground market and its associated risks. Despite the absence of specific regulations from the Spanish state and the legal ambiguities they operate under, the impact of CSCs is profound. They demonstrate a bottom-up, self-regulatory model that has been evolving for over two decades, advocating for alternatives to incarceration and promoting safer, community-oriented cannabis use.

**Despite its success and international recognition, Catalonia still lacks specific regulations for CSCs. This absence of a formal legal framework limits the potential of these clubs to effectively contribute to public health and social well-being. The administration's neglect has encouraged the distortion of the CSC model.**

Over the years, our organization ICEERS has collaborated with local NGOs as well as international drug policy advocates to study and promote this innovative model. In March of 2023, we hosted a Cannabis Social Club Study Tour in Barcelona, attended by nearly 30 international policymakers and advisors. This event shed light on Catalonia's

pioneering CSC model, its impact on harm reduction, and its potential as a template for global drug policy reform. CSCs are privileged spaces to research and implement science, education, and health-based interventions with cannabis users.

Our efforts extend beyond Catalonia. We have engaged in fruitful collaborations with government representatives and local organizations worldwide, including advising the President of Malta on implementing a community-based cannabis regulation model. Our expertise has supported the CSC model framework in Switzerland, the Czech Republic, Germany, and Colombia. We continually receive requests to advise and educate about this model to an expanding global audience.

As international trends lean towards the legalization and regulation of cannabis, it is imperative that Catalonia and Barcelona also make advancements. The current climate in Catalonia underscores the need for regulation and recognition of CSCs as a pioneering model for harm reduction internationally.

We urge the Barcelona City Hall to support the CSC model by:

- Advocating for laws that respect and tolerate CSCs, such as the Catalan municipalities of Mataró and Granollers have done, to ensure equal rights and freedoms for cannabis consumers.
- Engaging in dialogues for a stable legal framework that ensures safety for the members and workers of CSCs.
- Initiating parliamentary debates to remove discriminatory laws against cannabis consumption and decriminalize the plant in all forms.
- Establishing medicinal cannabis access programs that mandate the protection of health as a fundamental right.
- Develop international alliances with other municipalities that share a commitment to drug policy reform, centered on defending human rights and upholding scientific evidence.

Many international experts and policymakers have visited Barcelona to learn about this model and find ways to adapt it to their local contexts. The undersigned entities are committed to fostering an informed, respectful, and health-centric approach to cannabis regulation. We believe that with your support, Barcelona can continue to set a precedent for a more compassionate, evidence-based approach to cannabis regulation internationally.