

For immediate release

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Over a Hundred International Experts Support the Cannabis Social Club Model in Barcelona

ICEERS Advocates for the Regulation of Cannabis Social Clubs In Response to Barcelona City Council's Recent Actions

Barcelona – The International Center for Ethnobotanical Education, Research, and Service (ICEERS) has voiced its concern regarding the city council's position on cannabis social clubs (CSC). This concern is articulated in a letter sent to the city council of Barcelona and endorsed by 179 representatives from NGOs, government bodies, industry experts, activists, and universities spanning over fifty countries and five continents. The signatories view the intention to close these establishments as regressive and inconsistent with global trends in drug policy.

"The CSC model in Barcelona not only serves as an example of local innovation but also as a beacon of progress for the world of drug policy," says Òscar Parés, Deputy Director of ICEERS. "We are at a crucial juncture where we must choose between regression, or leading with a model that has demonstrated its value for public health and human rights."

Some of the letter's signatories, representing 53 countries, include **Daniel Carvalho Mejía**, a representative of the Congress of the Republic of Colombia, **Milton Romani Gerner**, former Secretary-General of the National Drug Board in Uruguay, **Ann Fordham**, Director of the International Drug Policy Consortium, **David R. Bewley-Taylor**, Director of the Global Drug Policy Observatory, **Isabel Pereira** of Dejusticia (Colombia), **Marc Marthaler** of Infodrog (Switzerland), **Neil Woods** of LEAP Europe, and **Rodrigo Uprimny**, former member of the Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights of the United Nations and former director of Dejusticia.

Internationally recognized entities have also joined the cause, including the **Transform Drug Policy Foundation** (UK), the **Institute for Policy Studies**, (USA) the **Washington Office on Latin America** (USA), **Open Society Foundations** (USA), **Relief Malta**, **Instituto RIA** (Mexico), **Transnational Institute** (Netherlands), the **International Drug Policy Consortium** (a consortium of over 200 international NGOs working on drug policy reform), the **European Coalition for Just and Effective Drug Policies**, **NORML** (France), **Acción Técnica Social** (Colombia), and the **Africa Network of People Who Use Drugs**.

Many local organizations also signed the letter, including the **Confederation of**

Cannabis Associations (ConFAC), the **Union of Patients for Cannabis Regulation** (UPRC), the **Federation of Cannabis Associations of Catalonia** (CatFAC), the **Catalan Network of People Who Use Drugs** (CATNPUD), the **Federation of Self-Regulated Cannabis Associations of Catalonia** (FEDCAC), the **Network of Women Against Drug Prohibition** (REMA), the **Associació Reus Som Útils** (ARSU), the **Green Party**, the **Clinical Society of Endocannabinology** (SCE), and **Metzineres**, among others.

A Pioneering International Model

Originating in Barcelona over two decades ago, CSCs stand out as a pioneering model worldwide for their innovative, community-oriented approach to cannabis consumption, prioritizing human rights and public health over criminalization. ICEERS, in collaboration with local and international organizations, has actively defended this model, emphasizing its role in harm reduction and the promotion of safe and community-based cannabis consumption.

Villan Alayón, a representative of a cannabis social club in Barcelona, comments: "The CSC model is a global reference in cannabis regulation. These spaces are not just for cannabis distribution; they are places where we work on risk reduction and prevention, education, and destigmatization of cannabis users. The Barcelona City Council should understand and support this approach by regulating the CSC model with health and risk reduction-based public policies, rather than pushing cannabis users onto the streets."

Lack of Legal Framework

Despite achieving success and gaining international recognition, the absence of a formal legal framework in Catalonia and Spain has hindered the ability of CSCs to make meaningful contributions to public health and social well-being. ICEERS raises concerns about the lack of specific regulations for CSCs, which has led to a deviation from the original model.

The Cannabis Social Club Study Tour, organized by ICEERS in March 2023, attracted prominent global figures working in drug policy. It highlighted the positive impact of these clubs on harm reduction and their potential as a model for global drug regulation reform. ICEERS has collaborated with governments and organizations worldwide to share knowledge about this model, including in Malta, Switzerland, Uruguay, the Czech Republic, Germany, and Colombia.

The letter to the Barcelona City Council urges them to take progressive steps toward regulating CSCs. This includes advocating for laws that respect and tolerate CSCs, engaging in discussions for a stable legal framework, initiating parliamentary debates on the decriminalization of cannabis, and establishing access programs for medical cannabis with a focus on health as a fundamental right.

With this call to action, ICEERS and the organizations endorsing the letter support

Barcelona as a city leading the compassionate and evidence-based approach to cannabis regulation in the international sphere. This movement reaffirms the commitment to an innovative, respectful model that has demonstrated its benefits both locally and globally.

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