

LEBANON and MedNET

**MedNET: the Pompidou Group's
co-operation network on drugs
and drug addiction
in the Mediterranean region**

Council of Europe, Strasbourg

**Pompidou Group of the Council of Europe
Co-operation Group to Combat Drug Abuse
and illicit trafficking in Drugs**



Lebanon



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

LEBANON AND MEDNET

Council of Europe

The opinions expressed in this work are the responsibility of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the Council of Europe.

All requests concerning the reproduction or translation of all or part of this document should be addressed to the Directorate of Communication (F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex or publishing@coe.int). All other correspondence concerning this document should be addressed to Directorate General Human Rights and Rule of Law – Pompidou Group.

Cover and layout: Documents and Publications Production Department (SPDP), Council of Europe

© Council of Europe, August 2016
Printed at the Council of Europe

Contents

MEDNET: THE POMPIDOU GROUP'S CO-OPERATION NETWORK ON DRUGS AND DRUG ADDICTION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION	5
Added value of the network	8
Co-operation with Lebanon	9
IMPACT OF MEDNET IN LEBANON	13
Flagship action by MedNET	13
Role of MedNET in the potential changes of drug law	13
Role of MedNET in research, collection, analysis and interpretation of information, in the setting up, support in the national drug observatory	14
Role of MedNET in treatment and care	14
Role of MedNET in prevention	14
Role of MedNET in human rights and access to treatment and care	14
Role of MedNET in law enforcement	15
Role of MedNET in South-South exchanges	15
Role of MedNET in North-South and South-North exchanges	15

MedNET: the Pompidou Group's co-operation network on drugs and drug addiction in the Mediterranean region

The Pompidou Group launched its activities in the Mediterranean region in Malta in 1999 with a conference on “co-operation in the Mediterranean region on drug use”.

■ Following this conference, the scale of the drug problem was studied for the first time in the region by means of surveys carried out in Algeria, Morocco and Lebanon as part of the “Mediterranean School Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs in Schools” (MedSPAD). This project, which is an adaptation of the ESPAD school surveys conducted in Europe, provides an insight into drug use and attitudes towards drugs in the Mediterranean region.

■ In 2006, at the initiative of France and the Netherlands, the Mediterranean network (MedNET) was set up with the participation of Algeria, Morocco, Malta and Tunisia and with the involvement of the Pompidou Group in co-ordinating and managing the network. The network was set up initially for one year. An evaluation carried out at the end of that period highlighted the flexibility of its operation and the network has been active ever since.

■ MedSPAD surveys were carried out at national level in Lebanon in 2008 and Morocco in 2009.

■ In 2013, the MedSPAD survey was repeated in Morocco and a first MedSPAD survey was carried out in Tunisia, thus demonstrating the importance of this instrument as a means of assessing drug use and attitudes towards it among young people attending school. In 2015, it was Egypt's turn to launch this survey, followed in 2016 by Algeria.

■ **MedNET's objective is to promote co-operation and a two-way transfer of knowledge between European and Mediterranean countries (North-South and South-North exchanges) as well as within the Mediterranean region (South-South).**

■ **The ultimate objective is to develop and implement coherent, balanced drug policies which respect human rights and address gender equality issues, based on evidence gathered by national observatories.**

■ Activities are aimed at improving public health and the implementation of drug policies in the region while respecting human rights and the needs expressed by countries.

■ MedNET action helps to reinforce the political and democratic process in the region by promoting the right to health of drug users and supporting the necessary legislative reforms. Lebanon and Morocco were the first countries to introduce opioid substitution treatment, in 2009 and 2011 respectively, thus offering drug users the possibility of rehabilitation. Algeria decided in 2016 to introduce it into its healthcare system.

■ As part of the promotion of a comprehensive and balanced drug policy, law enforcement activities are carried out in the region through country-specific activities in response to requests from countries concerned and through regional seminars: in Lebanon in 2010, on synthetic drugs, precursors and supply indicators, and in Strasbourg in 2012, on the fight against drug trafficking in airports.

■ The MedNET countries have participated regularly since 2014 in the meetings of the Pompidou Group's "Co-operation Group of Drug Control Services at European Airports and in General Aviation" (airports group) and since 2015 in the precursors network.

■ The network has expanded regularly and now has 12 member states. Lebanon, Italy and Portugal joined in 2007, Tunisia in 2009, Jordan, Egypt and Cyprus in 2010, Greece in 2011 and Turkey in 2016.

■ In 2015, the Palestinian National Authority participated in the network's activities.

■ Some MedNET non-member countries also contribute to its activities: Belgium, Croatia, Ireland, Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

■ The EMCDDA has participated in MedNET's activities on a regular basis since 2012. The European Commission has participated in MedNET's annual committee meetings since 2015.

■ At a high-level conference in 2009, the MedNET countries committed themselves to setting up national observatories/resource centres on drugs and drug addiction in collaboration with the European Monitoring Centre on Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA). The first national observatory on drugs and drug addiction was set up in 2011 in Morocco. In the same year Morocco also became the first Council of Europe non-member country to join the Pompidou Group. Egypt set up an observatory in 2011 and, at the initiative of Italy, round tables on this subject were held in Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia in 2013 and 2015. These were followed by the production of "country profiles" describing the drug situation, the legal and law-enforcement system, prevention and treatment and care programmes, and international co-operation.

■ **MedNET's target groups** are professionals: medical personnel, social workers, representatives of NGOs, researchers, officials responsible for prevention, health, research and law enforcement, and policy-makers.

■ **MedNET's work programme** is adopted annually by all the members of the network on presentation of national proposals for activities, including activities at regional level.

■ **Funding of the network:**

- ▶ Voluntary contributions 2006-2016, notably from France and Italy
- ▶ South Programmes I and II (2012-2017), funded by the EU and implemented by the Council of Europe
- ▶ Since 2016, funding from Norway for Morocco and Tunisia

■ MedNET is co-ordinated and run by the Secretariat of the Pompidou Group at the Council of Europe.

Added value of the network

- ▶ Adapting recognised methods and tools to the southern Mediterranean cultural context, e.g. MedSPAD
- ▶ Supporting the launch of national surveys
- ▶ Supporting the implementation of and/or changes in legislation by means of legal opinions
- ▶ Training in the health field
- ▶ Supporting the setting up of treatment and care centres
- ▶ Exchanging qualitative and quantitative information in various fields with a view to developing a comprehensive approach to the drug problem
- ▶ Playing a bridging role between the northern and the southern shores of the Mediterranean
- ▶ Exchange of experience between countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean, and initial assessment of the situation in each country, in the context of MedSPAD
- ▶ Supporting the introduction of different treatment and care methods, including opioid substitution treatment
- ▶ Taking account of needs expressed by stakeholders in the countries concerned when drawing up and implementing the work programme of activities
- ▶ Factoring gender into care services: women's specific needs in access to care
- ▶ Developing awareness and skills in the drugs field through multi-agency meetings bringing together the prevention, treatment and care and law-enforcement sectors
- ▶ Flexibility in programme implementation to meet emerging needs
- ▶ Evaluation of MedNET activities by the stakeholders
- ▶ Cost-effectiveness

Co-operation with Lebanon

2006

■ Participation in the conference on the role of research in drug policy development: interpretation, communication and use of results, held in Algiers, 3-4 December

2007

- ▶ Participation in Theoretical training in opiate substitution treatment, Rabat, Morocco 20-22 March
- ▶ Participation in practical training in opiate substitution treatment, Paris-Bordeaux 21-31 May
- ▶ Participation in National conference on the role of associations in the prevention of drug abuse, Algiers 26-27 June
- ▶ Participation in Pompidou Group Conference on reaching families in prevention, Porto 19-20 November

2008

- ▶ MedSPAD survey
- ▶ MedSPAD Lebanon meeting, Paris 21 January
- ▶ Regional training seminar on dealing with drug addiction, Annaba 30 March-1 April
- ▶ Regional training seminar on dealing with drug addiction, Algiers 6-8 April
- ▶ Regional training seminar on dealing with drug addiction, Oran 4-6 May
- ▶ MedSPAD Lebanon meeting and MedSPAD Morocco meeting, Paris 8-9 September
- ▶ Seminar on the detection of synthetic drugs, Algiers 2-4 December
- ▶ "How can we better treat drug addiction? New scientific and clinical challenges for Europe», Paris 9-10 December
- ▶ Participation of experts in the colloquy on drugs and different cultures, Paris 11-13 December

2009

- ▶ Analysis and communication of the results of the MedSPAD Lebanon survey, Beirut

- ▶ “Connections” project, entitled “Joining the dots: criminal justice, treatment and harm reduction”, Krakow 25-27 March
- ▶ Introduction to opiate substitution treatment with three training workshops, handbooks and guidelines
- ▶ Participation in the seminar on the application of existing legislation, Algiers 5-6 May

2010

- ▶ A countrywide study assessing the needs of drug users and of centres and institutions dealing with drug users. Round tables to discuss the application of legislation among stakeholders
- ▶ Study visit to observe a successful judicial system and the procedure with regard to referral for treatment and care in UK
- ▶ Regional training seminar on synthetic drugs, precursors and supply indicators, Beirut, Lebanon 13-15 October
- ▶ Participation in Regional seminar to prepare the way for setting up national observatories, Morocco 30 November-2 December

2011

- ▶ Participation in the seminar on drug in prisons in South-East Europe, in Skopje
- ▶ Participation in “Drugs, Alcohol, Women network”, Conference, (DAD NET), Rome 2-4 March

2012

- ▶ Training in prevention as part of the National Strategy for the Prevention of Drug Addiction
- ▶ Participation in MedNET regional seminar on the use of drug research in policies in the Mediterranean Region, Rabat 22-23 March
- ▶ Participation in the 2nd DAD NET conference, Rome 20-21 June
- ▶ Participation in the « 3ème colloque international francophone sur le traitement de la dépendance aux opioïdes » Geneva 18-19 October

2013

- ▶ Setting up of an information and counselling centre for young people in a high-risk area
- ▶ Life skills programme in 11 State and private schools in the Chiyah district of Beirut

2014

- ▶ Setting up of an information and counselling centre for young people in a high-risk area continued
- ▶ Life skills programme in 11 State and private schools in the Chiyah district of Beirut continued
- ▶ Training of staff working in the nightlife premises of Beirut in partnership with Portugal
- ▶ Participation on MedNET workshop on combating drug trafficking in airports
- ▶ Lebanon country profile

2015

- ▶ Epidemiological study of substance abuse in Lebanon
- ▶ Development of a national strategy on the prevention and treatment and care of alcohol and substance abuse
- ▶ Participation in the regional seminar on opioid substitution treatment, Algiers
- ▶ Host of an Algerian delegation on Opiate Substitution Treatment
- ▶ Participation in the 1st European Conference treatment on Addictive Behaviours and Dependencies
- ▶ Contribution to the publication on the "Gender dimension of non-medical use of prescription drugs in Europe and the Mediterranean region"
- ▶ Participation in the seminar "Drugs, Women and violence" in Rome
- ▶ Contribution to the draft recommendations on legislation regulating substitution treatment

2016

- ▶ Development of a national drug strategy with support of an international expert
- ▶ Setting up of a national observatory with expertise from EMCDDA in capacity building
- ▶ MedSPAD committee member
- ▶ Participation in the « 5^e colloque international francophone sur le traitement de la dépendance aux opioïdes », Rabat, November 30th, December 1st and 2nd 2016

Impact of MedNET in Lebanon

Professor Ramzi Haddad, Skoun, Beirut

Flagship action by MedNET

■ Lebanon lacks a national strategy for mental health and for substance use in particular and lacks resources necessary to improve the overall situation of substance use, on many levels: prevention, treatment and care, research, laws and drug policies. MedNET, over the past ten years, gave Lebanon the possibility to address all these issues by providing funds for national programs and activities, allowing experts from Lebanon to participate in regional and international meetings and conferences, providing evidence-based material and trainings and sending experts to Lebanon when necessary.

Role of MedNET in the potential changes of drug law

■ NGOs in Lebanon, with the help of governmental organizations, have been working for many years to implement the law on de-criminalizing drug use and increasing collaboration between legal bodies and substance use treatment and care centres. MedNET was one of the partners in this work, offering trainings and international expertise.

Role of MedNET in research, collection, analysis and interpretation of information, in the setting up, support in the national drug observatory

■ MedNET funded national researches and data collection (MedSPAD, Needs assessment, Country Profile) that highlighted Lebanon needs in many areas related to substance use and that are often used as a benchmark in many other national projects. On the other hand, setting a national drug observatory has been a key project slowed down for many years by government changes and political turmoil. Finally, with the help of MedNET, a National Strategy for Substance Use has been developed and the establishment of a National Drug Observatory is currently taking place.

Role of MedNET in treatment and care

■ MedNET was one of the main actors involved in the implementation of Buprenorphine Opiate Substitution Treatment in Lebanon after years of lobbying, which is a huge achievement for a country in that part of the world. Furthermore, MedNET offered the possibility to many Lebanese professionals to participate in international conferences and increase their expertise in treatment and care of substance use patients, and participate also specifically in many seminars about gender issues and care of women abusing drugs.

Role of MedNET in prevention

■ MedNET offered the opportunity to Lebanese professionals to participate in international conferences and trainings on prevention. Furthermore, MedNET funded prevention projects in Lebanon in different areas: schools, community- work and nightlife scene. These projects proved to be sustainable activities and sometimes encouraged other organisms in Lebanon to further develop such activities.

Role of MedNET in human rights and access to treatment and care

■ The role of MedNET in human rights is mainly related to its implication in law changes; it helped to decrease stigma related to drug users and improved their rights as people in need for treatment and care and not prosecution. The role of MedNET in increasing treatment and care modalities like for example Opiate Substitution Treatment enabled drug users to a better quality of treatment and care and a larger access to evidence-based treatment and care.

Role of MedNET in law enforcement

■ MedNET organized a regional training seminar on synthetic drugs, precursors and supply indicators in Beirut and Lebanese participants had the opportunity to attend workshops on combating drug trafficking in airports. These trainings helped in improving the capacity of the Lebanese government in controlling the emerging trend of new substances and establish co-operations with regional partners.

Role of MedNET in South-South exchanges

■ MedNET includes a lot of activities with South-South exchanges. These countries share many cultural similarities and many similar needs and challenges regarding many issues related to mentalities, laws, treatment and care needs. Therefore, these exchanges offer a rich possibility of interactions, shared expertise and opinions, project replication, law enforcement and fighting stigma in our countries.

Role of MedNET in North-South and South-North exchanges

■ Lebanon, like many South countries, lacks often resources and enough expertise. MedNET had provided, in many different settings and on very different projects, the chance to benefit from expertise of Northern countries, and participate in seminars and trainings organized by North countries. Inversely, North countries, through their interactions with the South can have a broader perspective of problems and difficulties related to the treatment and care and the fight against drug use.

The Pompidou Group

The Pompidou Group provides a multidisciplinary forum at the wider European level where it is possible for policy-makers, professionals and researchers to exchange experiences and information on drug use and drug trafficking. Formed at the suggestion of the French President Georges Pompidou in 1971, it has become a Council of Europe partial agreement in 1980. In 2016, it gathers 38 countries: 36 among the 47th Member States of the Council of Europe and Morocco and Israel.

MedNET

MedNET is the Mediterranean network for co-operation on drugs and addictions of the Pompidou Group. Created in 2006, it aims to foster co-operation, exchanges and mutual transfer of knowledge between the countries on both sides of the Mediterranean Basin. It supports the development of drug policies which respect health and human rights and address gender equality issues, based on evidence gathered by national observatories. In 2016, twelve countries are members of the network.



www.coe.int

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE