

# MOROCCO 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**



Marocco



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



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# **MOROCCO AND MEDNET**

Council of Europe

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

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**T**he 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 Morocco

■ Co-operation with Morocco began at the Conference on “co-operation in the Mediterranean region on drug use”, held in Malta in 1999.

■ Morocco subsequently participated in MedSPAD, a project launched in 2003, following talks between the Moroccan Minister for Health and the Executive Secretary of the Pompidou Group. A survey was conducted in Rabat in 2005, followed by nationwide surveys in 2009 and 2013.

■ On 1 July 2011, the Kingdom of Morocco officially acceded to the network after 5 years’ participation. The Minister for Health of the Kingdom of Morocco stressed in his letter to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe that “Morocco is convinced that responsible partnership-based co-operation is necessary to contain this scourge” and that “the interest shown by Morocco in acceding (...) is part of this process and testifies to its commitment to contribute to the efforts of the international community”.

## MedNET activities in which Morocco has participated

### 2006

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- ▶ Participation in the Conference on the role of research in drug policy development, held in Algiers, with a presentation of the experience gained from the MedSPAD survey in Rabat
- ▶ Participation of Morocco as an observer in the Ministerial Conference of the Pompidou Group

### 2007

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- ▶ Theoretical training in opioid substitution treatment (OST), Rabat
- ▶ Practical training in opioid substitution treatment, Paris-Bordeaux
- ▶ Visit to France by a delegation from the Moroccan Ministry of Health to study substitution treatment
- ▶ Seminar held in Paris to evaluate the OST pilot programme in Morocco
- ▶ Participation in the international seminar on application of the results of school surveys in West Africa, organised by the UNDOC Regional Office in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
- ▶ Participation by Morocco in the conference on the role of associations in the prevention of drug abuse, Algiers
- ▶ Study visit to the Netherlands on substitution treatment

- ▶ Participation in the Pompidou Group Conference on families and prevention, Porto

## 2008

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- ▶ Hearing given to the Pompidou Group Secretariat in Rabat by the Minister for Health, Ms Yasmina Baddou, who confirmed her commitment to Morocco's action plan within the MedNET network
- ▶ MedNET support for a seminar on risk reduction organised by Menahra (Middle East and North Africa Harm Reduction Association)
- ▶ Participation by Moroccan experts in colloquies held in Paris in December on sociology and medicine

## 2009

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- ▶ Creation of a diploma in addictology at the faculties of medicine in Casablanca and Rabat
- ▶ Contribution by MedNET to the training activities of the Arrazi "knowledge hub"
- ▶ Tripartite meeting NGOs / policy-makers / researchers, Rabat
- ▶ MedSPAD national survey
- ▶ Participation by Morocco in the study on the setting up of a Mediterranean observatory of drugs and drug addiction
- ▶ Participation in the MedNET high-level conference

## 2010

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- ▶ Reducing the risk of HIV and HCV contamination among drug users: advocacy and support workshop for NGOs working in the field of risk prevention among drug users
- ▶ Continuation of addictology courses (Rabat and Casablanca)
- ▶ Production of prevention material aimed at users, their families and the community
- ▶ Regional seminar to prepare the way for setting up national observatories/ resource centres on drugs, 30 November – 2 December, Rabat

## 2011

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- ▶ On 1 July 2011, the Kingdom of Morocco officially acceded to the Pompidou Group

- ▶ Continuation of the courses in addictology in Rabat and Casablanca
- ▶ Dissemination of prevention material aimed at users, their families and the community
- ▶ End of the pilot phase in the development of substitution treatment at the three centres in Rabat, Casablanca and Tangier

## 2012

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- ▶ Inclusion of opioid substitution treatment in the 2012 national programme
- ▶ Translation of prevention material into Berber
- ▶ Continuation of the addictology courses and placement of the trained persons in treatment and care centres
- ▶ Setting up of the first national observatories of drugs and drug addiction

## 2013

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- ▶ Continuation of the addictology courses in Casablanca and Rabat
- ▶ Second MedSPAD survey

## 2014

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- ▶ Support for the operation of the Moroccan observatory of drugs and drug addiction
- ▶ Addictology courses in Casablanca and Rabat
- ▶ Hosting of a study visit to low-threshold centres
- ▶ Participation in regional activities
- ▶ Workshop on the fight against trafficking in airports and annual meeting of the Pompidou Group's airports group, attended by 36 countries, Strasbourg, 18-20 June 2014
- ▶ Participation in the meeting of the MedSPAD Regional Committee
- ▶ Participation in the 3rd international symposium on "excessive gambling", Neuchâtel, Switzerland
- ▶ Participation in the « 4<sup>e</sup> colloque international francophone sur le traitement de la dépendance aux opioïdes », Brussels, Belgium, 18-19 December 2014

## 2015

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- ▶ Support for the operation of the Moroccan observatory of drugs and drug addiction in 2015. First report on the observatory's activities
- ▶ Addictology course in Rabat
- ▶ Addictology course in Casablanca
- ▶ Training course on "pathological gambling", Lausanne, Switzerland, 26 to 28 November 2015
- ▶ Participation in regional activities
- ▶ Participation in the meeting of the MedSPAD Committee
- ▶ Contribution to the report by the MedSPAD Committee "A first glance at the situation in the Mediterranean region in relation to the prevalence of alcohol, tobacco and drug use among adolescents"
- ▶ Participation in the Pompidou Group's airports seminar, Strasbourg, 17-19 June 2015
- ▶ Participation in the first European Conference on Addictive Behaviours and Dependencies, Lisbon

## 2016

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- ▶ Addictology courses in Casablanca and Rabat between September 2016 and June 2017
- ▶ Support for the operation of the Moroccan observatory of drugs and drug addiction
- ▶ Prevention handbook
- ▶ MedSPAD III
- ▶ Organisation of the « 5<sup>e</sup> colloque international francophone sur le traitement de la dépendance aux opioïdes », Rabat, November 30th, December 1st and 2nd 2016
- ▶ Member of the MedSPAD Committee

# Impact of MedNET on Morocco

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Professor Jallal Toufiq and Professor Fatima Elomari, Moroccan Observatory of Drugs and Drug Addiction

## Impact of MedNET on Morocco

■ MedNET's impact on Morocco can be felt on different levels:

- ▶ Networking of politicians and fieldworkers
- ▶ Focus on harm reduction policy, especially through the introduction of opioid agonist treatment programmes
- ▶ Encouragement of the evidence-based approach
- ▶ Impact of MedSPAD surveys on data collection and the prevention of drug use in the 15-17 age group and beyond
- ▶ Training of skilled personnel through the university diploma courses in addictology and different training courses (France, Switzerland, Italy, Cyprus etc.)
- ▶ Support for the concept of users' rights as an integral part of human rights in general
- ▶ Support for the Moroccan Observatory of Drugs and Drug Addiction (OMDA) through publication of the first report in 2014
- ▶ A sustainable mission for the OMDA

## MedNET's flagship activity

■ Two flagship activities:

- ▶ The first is the training of human resources via the university diploma courses in addictology in Rabat and Casablanca. MedNET has also given a boost to epidemiological research by providing technical and financial support for the MedSPAD surveys and encouraging the setting up of the OMDA
- ▶ The second is MedNET's role as a springboard for raising Morocco's profile on the European scene as a pioneer at regional level in the integrated management of drug use and, hence, as a candidate for membership of the Pompidou Group. Morocco duly became a member of the Pompidou Group in July 2011

## Role of MedNET in raising awareness of drugs policy

■ With the carrying out of MedSPAD surveys and the setting up of the Moroccan Observatory of Drugs and Drug Addiction (OMDA), policy on drugs and addiction is now based on scientific evidence. Training of human resources is also part of the strategy pursued by the Ministry of Health.

## Role of MedNET in data collection, analysis and interpretation and in setting up and supporting a national observatory

- ▶ Carrying out of three MedSPAD surveys in Morocco since 2006
- ▶ Holding of a seminar on the role of research in drug policy development, with a presentation of the experience gained from the MedSPAD survey in Rabat
- ▶ Setting up of the OMDA
- ▶ Production of the first OMDA report
- ▶ Supporting and ensuring the sustainability of the OMDA

## Role of MedNET in therapeutic treatment and care in Morocco

■ MedNET has supported the introduction of methadone agonist treatment by:

- ▶ Organising training seminars in Morocco
- ▶ Organising training courses in other countries (France and the Netherlands)

- ▶ Supporting the harm reduction programme
- ▶ Supporting the production of information leaflets on psychoactive substances

### **Role of MedNET in prevention in Morocco**

- ▶ Producing prevention material aimed at adolescents, psychoactive substance users and families
- ▶ Networking with NGOs involved in the prevention of psychoactive substance use
- ▶ Organising round tables on prevention
- ▶ Setting up a tripartite conference including academics, politicians and NGOs
- ▶ Organising training seminars for NGOs

### **Role of MedNET in South-South exchanges**

- ▶ Sharing information and experience with the countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean
- ▶ Participation by Morocco in scientific meetings and round tables in Algeria, Tunisia, Jordan, Egypt and Burkina Faso, with knowledge sharing
- ▶ Supporting neighbouring countries in setting up MedSPAD surveys, university courses in addictology and opioid agonist treatment
- ▶ Participation by Morocco in the international seminar on application of the results of school surveys in West Africa, organised by the UNDOC Regional Office in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
- ▶ Participation by Morocco in the conference on the role of associations in the prevention of drug abuse, Algiers

### **Role of MedNET in North-South exchanges**

- ▶ Sharing experience with European countries
- ▶ Training for Moroccan experts on “pathological gambling”, in Lausanne
- ▶ Participation by Moroccan experts in colloquies, conferences and seminars held in Europe, e.g. in France, Belgium, Portugal and Switzerland

## 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.



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