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Limiting the Availability of Doping Substances in Europe: A Shared Responsibility

Conference Conclusions

28 May 2026

Paris, Stade Jean Bouin

The Council of Europe would like to extend its thanks to all participants, speakers and organisers who joined and contributed to this event in Paris, with particular thanks to the World Anti-doping Agency (WADA), Agence française de lutte contre le dopage (AFLD) and representatives of the Council of Europe's Monitoring Group of the Anti-doping Convention (T-DO).

The opinions expressed in this document emerge from the Conference and do not represent the official position of the Council of Europe.

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Executive Summary

On 28 May 2026, the International Conference on *Limiting the Availability of Doping Substances in Europe: A Shared Responsibility* was held at Stade Jean Bouin in Paris, organised by the Council of Europe with the support of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA).

The Conference brought together representatives of public authorities, international organisations, anti-doping bodies, law enforcement agencies, the sports sector and the pharmaceutical industry to examine the growing availability and misuse of performance- and image-enhancing substances in Europe.

Participants highlighted that the use of doping substances is no longer confined to elite sport. It is increasingly present in recreational sport, fitness environments and wider lifestyle contexts, driven by body-image pressures, social media influence, cultural norms, and the ease of access provided by digital platforms. The Conference also noted the growing involvement of organised criminal networks in the trafficking of such substances, exploiting regulatory inconsistencies and enforcement gaps across jurisdictions.

Across the four themes discussed, participants identified a number of overarching conclusions:

First, reducing demand must become a priority, particularly among adolescents, young adults, gym users and recreational competitors. Prevention efforts should address the social and cultural drivers of use, strengthen digital literacy and health education, and promote targeted awareness-raising initiatives. Improved research and monitoring of substances and patterns of misuse are also essential.

Second, stronger measures are needed to address supply, product quality and health protection. This includes greater harmonisation of definitions and classifications, improved regulatory cooperation, and fuller use of existing legal instruments were identified as priorities.

Third, the Conference underlined the importance of enhancing detection and law enforcement capacities. There is a need for clearer national coordination arrangements between anti-doping organisations, customs, medicines regulators, law enforcement bodies.

Fourth, effective governance and coordination were recognised as fundamental to sustained progress. Participants stressed the need to strengthen national coordination platforms, involve public health authorities more fully, engage more systematically with private-sector actors such as gyms and online platforms, and make better use of international cooperation mechanisms.

Overall, the Conference concluded that limiting the availability of doping substances in Europe requires a comprehensive and shared response.

The Council of Europe's existing instruments and mechanisms — notably the Anti-Doping Convention, the MEDICRIME Convention and the work of the European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines and Healthcare (EDQM) — provide an important basis for strengthened action and cooperation.

This response must combine prevention, public health action, regulatory oversight, criminal enforcement and cross-sector cooperation. Such a whole-of-society approach is considered the most effective means to address these challenges at the intersection of sport integrity and public health.

Introduction

The International Conference on Limiting the Availability of Doping Substances was held at Stade Jean Bouin in Paris on 28 May 2026. It was organised by the Council of Europe with the support of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA).

The Conference addressed the growing availability and use of performance- and image-enhancing substances beyond elite sport, particularly in recreational sport and fitness environments. Demand is increasing due to factors such as social media influence, body-image pressures, and easy online access. Organised crime groups are also increasingly involved in trafficking these substances, exploiting regulatory and enforcement gaps.

The Council of Europe addresses this issue through its international conventions and cooperation mechanisms in the fields of sport, medicines regulation and public health, including the Anti-Doping Convention, the MEDICRIME Convention and the European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines and Healthcare (EDQM). The Conference brought together public authorities, international organisations, anti-doping organisations, law enforcement bodies, the sports sector and the pharmaceutical industry to exchange expertise and identify coordinated responses.

The Conference focused on four key themes, with key findings and priority actions identified below.

1. Demand Reduction & Awareness

The increasing demand for doping substances, particularly within gyms, fitness centres and recreational sport, is a growing concern. Demand is shaped by a complex interplay of individual, social, and environmental factors, including body image and aesthetic ideals, cultural norms within health and fitness settings, digital influences, and broader issues related to identity, wellbeing and perceived risk. .

Discussions emphasised the importance of reducing demand among at-risk groups, promoting a culture of clean exercise, and raising awareness of the associated health and ethical risks. The priority groups identified included gym users, adolescents and young adults, and recreational competitors participating in endurance and fitness events.

Key findings

- The demand for doping substances is increasing, particularly in gyms, fitness centres and recreational sport settings.
- Use is frequently driven by body image and aesthetic motivations rather than competitive performance.
- Adolescents, young adults and recreational competitors were identified as particularly vulnerable groups.
- Social media and online platforms play a significant role in promoting and increasing access to doping substances.
- Existing data and research are fragmented and lack comparability across countries.

Priority actions

- Address the misuse and abuse of doping substances more systematically as a public health issue, including a review of current prevention policies.
- Strengthen digital literacy and health education for adolescents as part of broader lifestyle education programmes.
- Enhance regulation and prevention measures targeting the online promotion and sale of doping substances, including through instruments such as the European Union's Digital Services Act.

- Improve evidence-based research, data collection and information-sharing mechanisms at European and global levels. This includes establishing systems to track new substances and changing patterns of use.
- Encourage the development and delivery of targeted education and awareness-raising campaigns for at-risk groups, working in partnership with key stakeholders and partners across the fitness and sport sectors.
- Promote collaboration across public health, sport, education, law enforcement, and industry stakeholders to address demand and cultural drivers in a coordinated way (whole-systems approach).

2. Quality & Supply Control and Health Protection

The circulation of illicit, falsified, substandard and falsely labelled performance-enhancing substances represents both a threat to sport integrity and a growing public health concern. Products sold online as supplements or lifestyle enhancers often contain undeclared or harmful substances and are subject to limited oversight.

Addressing this challenge requires stronger coordination among international organisations, medicines regulators, anti-doping authorities, laboratories, customs, law enforcement bodies, digital platforms and public health institutions.

Key findings

- The circulation of illicit, falsified, substandard and falsely labelled performance-enhancing substances represents a growing public health and health security concern.
- Online sales and marketing significantly increase the availability of risky and unregulated substances.
- Consumers are exposed to serious health risks due to contamination, adulterated, undeclared ingredients and the absence of effective oversight.
- Existing regulatory approaches and classifications differ considerably across countries.

Priority actions

- Develop common definitions and classifications of the most frequently abused substances.
- Strengthen partnerships and operational cooperation at national and European levels.
- Promote more harmonised approaches at the European level to supplement regulation.
- Increase the use of existing legal and regulatory instruments, including the MEDICRIME Convention and the Falsified Medicines Directive.
- Improve information-sharing and the exchange of expertise and good practices between relevant organisations and authorities.

3. Detection & Law Enforcement

The effectiveness of anti-doping legislation depends on the operational capacity of authorities to detect and intercept illicit substances. Effective cooperation between law enforcement authorities, anti-doping organisations and other relevant actors is essential.

The growing abuse of doping substances requires stronger law enforcement engagement alongside existing anti-narcotics frameworks.

Key findings

- The effectiveness of anti-doping legislation depends on the operational capacity of authorities to detect and intercept illicit substances.
- Cooperation between law enforcement authorities, anti-doping organisations and other stakeholders remains uneven and fragmented.
- Doping-related trafficking is increasingly linked to broader forms of organised and financial crime.
- Many law enforcement authorities and prosecutors lack specialised expertise on doping-related offences.
- There is no dedicated platform enabling systematic communication between law enforcement authorities and NADOs.

Priority actions

- Designate clear coordinating entities at national level, such as law enforcement bodies or NADOs.
- Consider taking legislative actions to strengthen efforts to limit the availability of doping substances on national markets.
- Establish joint taskforces involving law enforcement, customs, NADOs, medicines regulators and healthcare professionals.
- Improve timely information-sharing and operational coordination mechanisms.
- Strengthen domestic and transnational joint investigations.
- Increase specialised training and awareness-raising for law enforcement authorities, customs officers, prosecutors and magistrates.
- Harmonise criminal offences and classifications related to doping substances across Europe, while ensuring that other related offences (such as financial crimes or pharmaceutical crimes) can be addressed.
- Develop doping threat notices and dedicated communication platforms, with the aim of sharing information about doping trafficking methodology, new tactics, products, etc. to relevant stakeholders.

4. Coordination & Governance

Effective national coordination frameworks are essential to address the broader misuse of doping substances, while ensuring that respective roles and responsibilities are clearly understood. Barriers to cooperation need to be effectively identified and addressed to ensure that no major gaps remain. While NADOs play a central role in sport-related anti-doping efforts, broader cooperation with medicines regulators, law enforcement authorities, public health institutions and legal professionals (particularly judges and prosecutors) is required.

Key findings

- Legal frameworks alone are insufficient to ensure effective cooperation and enforcement.
- Information-sharing remains constrained by judicial, privacy and confidentiality limitations.
- Effective cooperation depends heavily on trust, regular interaction and operational experience between institutions.
- Public health authorities are not yet sufficiently engaged despite the broader health implications of doping.
- National platforms bringing together anti-doping, health, customs and justice sectors remain underdeveloped or non-operational in many countries.

- Cooperation with gyms, online platforms and the private sector remains inconsistent and difficult in the absence of clear mandates or sectoral structures.
- International cooperation remains fragmented across anti-doping, law enforcement, customs, medicines regulation and public health sectors, while some existing international tools and platforms to support cooperation being underutilised.

Priority actions

- Strengthen national coordination frameworks involving anti-doping, law enforcement, legal professionals and public health authorities.
- Establish or reinforce national platforms or focal points to facilitate clarify responsibilities, foster operational coordination, and support multi-agency dialogue and sharing of good practices, taking inspiration from examples such as the National Platform system within the [MEDICRIME Convention](#) and National Compliance Platforms under UNESCO's International Convention against Doping in Sport.
- Consider ratification of the MEDICRIME Convention as a legal international instrument which provides a key platform for international exchange of information among law enforcement agencies.
- Facilitate more effective information-sharing arrangements while respecting applicable legal safeguards.
- Promote regular joint training, operational exchanges and capacity-building activities, including for judges, prosecutors and other legal professionals.
- Increase the involvement of public health authorities in prevention and policy responses.
- Strengthen engagement with gyms, online platforms and other relevant private-sector actors.