

Statement by the Portuguese Presidency of the Pompidou Group at the 63rd session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs

As a Council of Europe entity, the Pompidou Group upholds the core values enshrined in the Council of Europe's statute the promotion of human rights, democracy and rule of law, promoting a balanced approach to drug policy, supporting both demand and supply reduction of illicit drugs. It offers a forum for open debate, exchange of experiences and as a platform for science and evidence-based innovation, it also links policy, research and practice.

The 40 Member States of the Pompidou Group reaffirm that drug policy must be developed, implemented, and evaluated in full respect of human rights.

The Portuguese Presidency welcomes the publication in 2019 by the International Centre on Human Rights and Drug Policy, UNAIDS, WHO and UNDP of the Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policy as an important international reference instrument for governments, policy makers, experts, civil society organisations or affected communities working daily to ensure human rights compliance.

The work programme 2019-2022 implemented under the chairmanship of Portugal and vice-chairmanship of Poland, entitled 'Sustainable drug policies respectful of human rights', emphasizes the need to integrate human rights into the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of drug policies. Indeed, human rights are a transversal issue taken into account in all Pompidou Group activities in support of Member States meeting their obligations under the Council of Europe and United Nations Conventions in the delivery of their drug policies.

Reaffirming that drug policy must be balanced, evidence-based, comprehensive and aiming at promoting the involvement of civil society, people who use drugs and their relatives, the Group implemented activities in 2019 on gender perspective in drug policy, the role of the different stakeholders in drug prevention, drug related challenges for refugees and migrants and Sustainable Development Goals.

The cooperation in the Mediterranean Region continues to be a priority for the Pompidou Group and MedNET, the Network on cooperation in the Mediterranean Region, which has been promoting the exchange and mutual transfer of knowledge between countries from both sides of the Mediterranean. Through its regional actions, it contributes to the training of human resources in addictology in order to respond to the needs of persons who use drugs and improve their access to treatment and care and therefore their access to health. In the demand reduction field, MedNET develops prevention activities focused towards youth based on the evidence of MedSPAD school surveys which are carried out in the region.

Aware of the need to reflect, follow up and evaluate the new developments in the field of drug policies and the new challenges ahead, the Pompidou Group launched in 2019 its statutory review process. This was done through conducting an open discussion with its Member States on the mandate, functioning and working methods of the Group. The adoption of a new statute is foreseen for 2021, at the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Pompidou Group.

The Pompidou Group of the Council of Europe is committed to continue and expand its efforts to further cooperate with UNODC/CND, WHO, UNDP, OAS/CICAD, the European Commission, the EMCDDA and with civil society organisations towards our common goal to bring public health and the respect of human rights to the forefront of drug policy, as set by the outcome document of the 2016 Special Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations (UNGASS) and reaffirmed by the 2019 Ministerial Declaration.