
Recommendation and contribution of the Conference of INGOs to the statutory revision process of the Pompidou Group (Cooperation Group to Combat Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking in Drugs)

adopted by the Conference of INGOs on 15 October 2020

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Rational and context

The Council of Europe Pompidou Group is an intergovernmental¹ body established in 1971² on the base of a partial agreement between the States. Its approach and also its current core mission is to contribute to the development of multidisciplinary, innovative, effective and evidence-based drug policies in its Member States.

During its Ministerial Conference held in Stavanger in November 2018, the Pompidou Group's member States decided to initiate a process to review the Group's mandate, operation and working methods, in order to more adequately reflect today's drug policy evolution and the challenges faced at national and international level. The follow-up of this decision is an integral part of the 2019-2022 Work Programme adopted by the Ministers, who elected Portugal as the new Presidency for the four-years period.

Making full use of the fact that the Pompidou Group and the Conference of INGOs are part of the Council of Europe, the Executive Secretary solicited the President of the Conference of INGOs to reflect together on:

- the potential extension of the Group's mandate allowing to encompass addictions or addictive behaviours which are related to licit substances (such as alcohol or tobacco) and new forms of addictions (such as Internet gambling and gaming);
- how to focus on the respect/promotion of human rights in designing, adopting and implementing drug/addiction policies;
- how to reflect on the changing of the official name of the Group in order to better reflect its multidisciplinary and human rights-based approach;
- how to build synergies between the Pompidou Group and the Conference of INGOs;
- how to support the Pompidou Group in the reinforcing of cooperation with civil society organizations.

In order to start this process, a first online meeting took place with some specialised INGOs of the Conference of INGOs at the beginning of September, in order to propose first concrete ideas about

¹ The Pompidou Group is a partial agreement between currently 38 member States of the Council of Europe and Morocco, Israel and Mexico.

² <https://www.coe.int/en/web/pompidou/about>

the challenges and possible cooperation between the Pompidou Group, the Conference of INGOs and its members.

Through the adoption of the following Recommendation, the Conference of INGOs wishes to contribute to the new Statute of the Pompidou Group which is planned for adoption by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Group's foundation, in 2021.

Recommendations:

Considering:

- that any person, suffering from an addiction, is not truly free and might be limited in their ability to enjoy to the fullest their rights and freedoms granted by the European Convention on Human Rights and the Council of Europe conventions and treaties;
- the rights enshrined in the Revised European Social Charter, as well as its aspired rights and principles, namely that "Everyone has the right to benefit from any measures enabling him to enjoy the highest possible standard of health attainable";
- that the addiction problems often affect not only the person suffering from addiction but also their family, community and the ability of the person to contribute in their full potential to society in large;
- that, in 2016, more than 130 million Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALYs)³ were attributable to alcohol use and drug use as a risk factor⁴;
- the scientific support for the concept that some legal addictive substances might cause more harm than illegal addictive substances⁵;
- the scientific support to consider the drug dependence not only as health problem but primarily as a social problem which needs to be addressed as a chronic medical illness since this approach provides lasting benefits⁶;
- the growing body of evidence that behavioural addictions (non-substance addictions) "resemble substance addictions in many domains, including natural history, phenomenology, tolerance, comorbidity, overlapping genetic contribution, neurobiological mechanisms, and response to treatment"⁷;
- that addiction also affects minors and other vulnerable groups, such as pregnant women, elderly and migrants and that it seems to be a problem on the rise⁸;
- the interest of the Conference of INGOs and its members in achieving a more human rights approach to the addiction phenomena;

The Conference of INGO

- **Underlines** the importance of striking a more balanced approach between criminalization of drug related acts and the medical, social, psychological, humanitarian and human rights perspective in the related public policies;
- **States** that the addiction is not a crime, but a human rights issue connected to well-being policies and the enjoyment of rights as well as social cohesion;

³ More information about this modality and indicators of assessment

https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Esp%C3%A9rance_de_vie_corrig%C3%A9e_de_l%27incapacit%C3%A9

⁴ GBD 2016 Alcohol and Drug Use Collaborators. The global burden of disease attributable to alcohol and drug use in 195 countries and territories, 1990-2016: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2016 [published correction appears in *Lancet Psychiatry*. 2019 Jan;6(1):e2]. *Lancet Psychiatry*. 2018;5(12):987-1012. doi:10.1016/S2215-0366(18)30337-7

⁵ David Nutt, Leslie A. King et al. Development of a rational scale to assess the harm of drugs of potential misuse. *Lancet*, 369, 9566, 3 2007

⁶ McLellan AT, Lewis DC, O'Brien CP, Kleber HD. Drug Dependence, a Chronic Medical Illness: Implications for Treatment, Insurance, and Outcomes Evaluation. *JAMA*. 2000;284(13):1689-1695. doi:10.1001/jama.284.13.1689

⁷ Grant JE, Potenza MN, Weinstein A, Gorelick DA. Introduction to behavioral addictions. *Am J Drug Alcohol Abuse*. 2010;36(5):233-241. doi:10.3109/00952990.2010.491884

⁸ Merikangas KR, McClair VL. Epidemiology of substance use disorders. *Hum Genet*. 2012;131(6):779-789. doi:10.1007/s00439-012-1168-0

- **Emphasizes** the importance of considering the consumption of drugs, both legal and illegal, and new forms of addiction as a result of multifactorial aspects, and as such opposes stigmatisation;
- **Stresses** that medical and social approaches aiming to prevent and reduce the risk of addictions, as well as their treatment when necessary, are more effective, cheaper and more beneficial for the individual, groups, society and the State than a repressive approach.
- **Underlines** the importance of multilateral cooperation between public and private institutions, civil society organizations and experts as a decisive tool for working in a multidisciplinary and intersectoral approach;
- **Encourages** the Pompidou Group to look at addictions from an ecological and systemic perspective considering them as a result of interactions between people concerned and the environment in which they evolve;
- **Recommends** to the Council of Europe Pompidou Group to include the educational and social dimensions and public awareness activities in its mandate, with a special attention on youth;
- **Encourages** the Pompidou Group to conduct an analysis of the drug policies of its member States in order to find concrete evidence regarding the efficiency of different approaches (i.e. repressive and more liberal) applied in public policies to address addictions and the use of drugs;
- **Encourages** the Pompidou Group to examine and produce an analysis of the use of drugs (in particular cannabis) for medical purposes and make recommendations in this regard;
- **Welcomes** and applauds the actions of the Pompidou Group, namely:
 - the work done so far on a sensitive topic;
 - its inclusiveness for membership which goes beyond the Council of Europe members States;
 - its proactiveness in expanding its action in order to better achieve its core mission;
 - its intention to stand by a human-rights' approach;
 - for inviting the Conference of INGOs to contribute to its current statute revision.

Regarding the inclusion of the civil society perspective in its working and decision-making process, the Conference of INGOs

- **Asks** the Pompidou Group to grant the Conference of INGOs as a Council of Europe body, the status of permanent participant in its meetings and working processes (without the right to vote), in order to ensure the continuity and effectiveness of substantial cooperation centred on the common priorities;
- **Encourages** the Pompidou Group to define a process of acquiring observer status for INGOs granted with participatory status by the Council of Europe Secretary General;
- **Encourages** the Group to hold regular consultations with civil society on specific issues to incorporate a diversity of views and strengthen multi-perspective in its work⁹;
- **Invites** the Group to include the users' perspective in the analysis produced by the group, which can also be heard during such consultations.

To conclude, the Conference of INGOs commits itself to:

- **Collaborating** with the Pompidou Group and other Council of Europe bodies in the pursuit of a human rights-based approach to addiction.
- **Fostering** a more human rights approach to the topic of addiction in its actions and among its own members.

⁹ Guide to Public Debate on Human Rights and Biomedicine, adopted by the Committee on Bioethics (DH-BIO) at its 16th meeting (19-21 November 2019)