



The Pompidou Group

Enlarged Partial Agreement of the Council of Europe

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 the whole range of drug misuse and trafficking problems. Formed at the suggestion of the French President Georges Pompidou in 1971, it has become a Council of Europe partial agreement in 1980. As an 'Enlarged Partial Agreement' of the Council of Europe it gathers 38 countries from Europe and beyond (as of 1 January 2016).

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Gender

Introducing a
gender dimension
into drug policy

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Introducing a gender dimension into drug policy

The **Pompidou Group** has pioneered the **integration of the gender dimension into drug policies** in Europe for almost two decades. Triggered by a proposal of the Norwegian Minister of Justice, it sought a better understanding of the specificities of each gender. The first concrete result of that proposal was a Pompidou Group symposium on women and drugs, hosted by Switzerland in 1988.

Under Norway's current Presidency and with Italy's Vice Presidency, the gender dimension in drug policy is again high on the Pompidou Group's agenda. The Group's 2015-2018 work programme encompasses the following:

Gender dimension of non-medical use of prescription drugs

There is growing public concern around the world about the non-medical use of prescription drugs which, according to some, reaches epidemic dimensions. Women constitute a special risk group. Understanding gender aspects of NMUPD is critical for effective policy and practice. Following research conducted in 2014, the **Pompidou Group** published a study on the **gender dimension** of non-medical use of prescription drugs (NMUPD) in 17 countries in Europe and the Mediterranean region.

The evidence confirms that women are a high-risk category for NMUPD and reveals that no standardised monitoring system for NMUPD exists either in Europe or in the Mediterranean Region. The study recommended that national authorities conduct further research and develop coherent policies, incorporating effective gender sensitive practices.

Women, drugs and violence: a review of existing scientific literature

The abovementioned study on the gender dimension of the non-medical use of prescription drugs also called for a better understanding of the link between drug use among women and violence.

Following this recommendation, the **Pompidou Group** arranged in 2015 a review of literature on violence (experienced or perpetrated) and psychoactive substance use among women in Europe and in the Mediterranean Region. This exploratory research considered 63 articles related to the issue of violence and the use of psychotropic substances among women published in 12 countries.

Women, drugs and violence: consultation of professionals

Digging deeper in the phenomenon, and in order to give an operational perspective to this review of literature, a consultation was also organised in 2015 through focus groups with addiction treatment and risk and harm reduction professionals in four countries: France, Italy, Portugal and Spain.

The outcomes of this consultation were presented at a seminar hosted in Rome by the Department for Anti-Drug Policies of the Presidency of the Italian Council of Ministers, where other professionals contributed their work experiences. Participants from 22 countries assessed how exposure of women to violence is taken into account in risk reduction and addiction treatment systems. They listened to the difficulties and needs of staff in those services and heard about good practices and professional guidelines. In dialogue with policy-makers, they sketched out recommendations with a view to addressing more effectively the phenomenon of violence involving women addicted to psychoactive substances.

Italy's Department for Anti-Drug Policies is leading further Pompidou Group activities in this field, in particular as regards women and rape drugs.

In developing activities aiming at introducing a gender dimension in drug policies, the **Pompidou Group** continues to promote the link between research, policy and practice, against a backdrop of human rights. It also contributes to the **Council of Europe Strategy on Gender Equality 2014-2017** which strives for the advancement and empowering of women and the effective realisation of gender equality in Council of Europe member states.