



Denis HUBER, Executive Secretary of the Pompidou Group
Welcome session – 28 January 2025
TSI project on Promoting mental health children and youth through
addressing the risks of online gambling and gaming

Welcome session

Dear Participants,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you today, at the first international conference organised on the topic of addictive behaviours in the digital environment with the involvement of the Pompidou Group of the Council of Europe. Between 2019 and 2021, the Pompidou Group went through a statutory revision process which resulted in the adoption of its revised statute by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in June 2021, on the occasion of the Pompidou Group's 50th Anniversary. One major feature of the new statute is the extension of its mandate to tackling not only illicit substances, but also addictive behaviours. Since 2023, our work has started in addressing the issue of online addictions, and specifically online gambling and online video game playing. A guidance paper on strategies and regulatory options aimed at reducing related risks and harms was adopted by the Pompidou Group in May last year.

It is in this context that we have been launching a technical assistance project on promoting the mental health of children and youth through addressing online gambling and gaming. It is a new cooperation format for the Pompidou Group, as we are working closely with the European Commission which provides both financial support and expertise in the project's implementation, through the Technical Support Instrument of DG REFORM. It is also a challenging project, because it brings together 9 EU countries – Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Poland, Portugal and Slovenia, specifically the state institutions responsible for addiction policies who also represent their country in the Pompidou Group.

This project is co-funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument and implemented by the Council of Europe, in cooperation with the European Commission.

This launching conference, as a major joint Council of Europe / European Union event, is also open to other interested countries, members of the Pompidou Group. The relevance and timeliness of its topic is clear when we look around the room – 72 representatives of government institutions from 22 countries are present today, and others are listening online.

Therefore, we have the most important element of success for this conference: the opportunity to exchange national experiences, discuss reform efforts, lessons learned and challenges ahead across member states, across different continents and presenting the views of governments, academia and civil society. As an international platform for cooperation in the field of drugs and addiction policies with a strong focus on human rights, I believe this is the greatest asset the Pompidou Group can offer to this project and to the discussion on addressing addictive behaviours in the digital age.

I would like to finish by expressing my sincere gratitude to the Italian Presidency of the Pompidou Group for hosting this launch conference and leading this important project. My gratitude equally goes to DG REFORM for its support and to the countries participating in the project, for their interest and engagement.

Dear Participants, I encourage you to take active part in the discussions in the following days and wish us an interesting and inspiring conference!