

PRIORITIES OF THE POMPIDOU GROUP IN 2025

2024 was a year of major developments for the Council of Europe and its Pompidou Group. The Council of Europe celebrated its 75th anniversary, culminating in the ministerial session of 16-17 May, which provided an opportunity to take stock - one year on - of the follow-up to the Reykjavik Summit, which brought together the Heads of State and Government of the 46 member countries of the Organisation in May 2023.

As part of the follow-up to the Summit's priorities and decisions, the Pompidou Group adopted political guidelines on the risks and harm associated with online gambling and betting (in May) and on human rights and drug policies (in November), with a view to preparing two draft Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers, in co-operation with the relevant Council of Europe bodies, in particular the Steering Committees on the Media and the Information Society (CDMSI) and on Human Rights (CDDH). It has also set up a joint expert group with the CDDH, the Steering Committee on Crime Problems (CDPC) and the MEDICRIME Committee to draw up guidelines for combating organised crime and drug trafficking, based on the case law of the European Court of Human Rights. Finally, it has developed - as part of the Council of Europe's HELP programme - an online course on criminal justice and community responses to drug use and addiction, which will be launched in March 2025.

As regards support for Ukraine, which joined the Pompidou Group in January 2022, ongoing efforts are being made to integrate the relevant authorities and interlocutors (including civil society) into the Group's activities, despite the tragic circumstances of the war. In addition, a specific co-operation programme is being implemented to support the introduction of opioid agonist treatment (OAT) in Ukrainian prisons and pre-trial detention and to establish a therapeutic community to treat substance use disorders in a Ukrainian prison, based on the successful experiment conducted in Pruncul prison near Chisinau (Moldova) since 2018. Finally, the Pompidou Group provided legal expertise on a draft law on rehabilitation under discussion in the Verkhovna Rada, in terms of compliance with Council of Europe human rights standards.

This third (and final) year of the Italian Presidency will culminate in the 19th Ministerial Conference of the Pompidou Group on 27-28 November in Rome, which will elect a new Presidency and adopt a work programme for the period 2026-2029. In the meantime, implementation of the 2023-2025 work programme adopted at the Lisbon Ministerial Conference in December 2022 will continue, building on the related priorities defined by the Presidency in January 2023. In particular:

- following the success of the first two editions held in Strasbourg in December 2023 and November 2024, a third annual conference on drug control networks will be organised in the autumn;

- a new joint project between the Pompidou Group and the European Commission (DG Reform) has been set up to promote the mental health of children and young people by addressing the risks associated with video games and online gambling in nine Member States. An international launch conference will be held in Rome on 28-29 January 2025;
- a new edition of the executive course on drug policy (aimed at senior managers) will be organised within the framework of the International Academy of Drug Policies created in 2020 by the Pompidou Group;
- the Pompidou Group will organise, in partnership with the City of Strasbourg, the Ithaque association and the European Union Drugs Agency, the 4th European seminar on low-risk drug consumption rooms, on 18-19 June 2025 in the Hemicycle of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg;
- a wide range of activities will continue to be implemented within the Pompidou Group's two regional networks in South-East Europe and the Mediterranean;
- work will continue on redefining the role of the police in addiction prevention, developing guidelines on assessing their contribution to addiction prevention and a competency framework for officers;
- the Pompidou Group will also continue its work to promote guidelines for the development and consolidation of comprehensive services for children and families affected by substance dependence, building on the successful experience of the national implementation seminar organised by Mexico in October 2024;
- in 2025, the Pompidou Group will organise a new edition of its Prevention Prize, which has been awarded at regular intervals since 2004 to innovative youth projects in the field of drug and addiction prevention. The awards ceremony will take place in the context of the Rome Ministerial Conference at the end of November;
- the project successfully implemented in Georgia in the field of prevention since July 2023 will continue as part of the Council of Europe's action plan for Georgia 2024-2026;
- in Moldova, the Pompidou Group will continue its activities to improve the treatment and care of people with addictions within the prison system. A new project, aimed at redefining the country's strategy and action plan on drugs and addiction, has been included in the Council of Europe's 2025-2027 action plan for Moldova;
- lastly, the Pompidou Group will be taking an active part in the 68th session of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs in Vienna in March.