Co-operation Group to Combat Drug Abuse and illicit trafficking in Drugs

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Pompidou Group position statement on the value of the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD)

The European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD) is an initiative dating back to 1995, which provides data on alcohol, tobacco and drug use among the 15-16 year old students across the continent. The methodology employed allows comparisons between countries and the tracking of trends in substance use among youth over time. In 2015, the sixth data collection will allow countries which have participated over the last twenty years to review these trends for their country and allows new countries to get a first overview of the attitudes and use of drugs among young people.

Since the start of this project, the Pompidou Group of the Council of Europe has been the first international organisation to support the initiative of the “Swedish Council for Information on Alcohol and other Drugs” (CAN) to start a collaborative research project to simultaneously perform school surveys on alcohol and other drugs, using a methodology developed and piloted by Pompidou Group experts. Later, the Pompidou Group has funded and continue to fund the participation of researchers from Central and Eastern European countries in regional seminars and annual meetings.

Since 2008, the Mediterranean Network of the Pompidou Group (MedNET) has promoted the ESPAD methodology in the Mediterranean Region and has adapted it to the context of these countries. This resulted in nation-wide surveys being conducted in Lebanon in 2009, in Morocco (in 2009 and 2013) and in Tunisia in 2013.

In 2012, in line with its mission of promoting the interaction between policy, research and practice, the Pompidou Group and ESPAD in cooperation with EMCDDA undertook an assessment of the impact of ESPAD among the ESPAD researchers, Reitox focal points and Permanent Correspondents of the Pompidou Group which showed that ESPAD has had an important impact in many of the participating countries and that the ESPAD 2011 report has influenced the drug debate and policy in many countries.

The Pompidou Group therefore continues to support the collection of comparable data through national school surveys and considers the ESPAD methodology as an appropriate instrument to do so. The Pompidou Group therefore strongly encourages stakeholders to participate in the implementation of ESPAD as a means to understand drug use among youth in Europe.

Yours faithfully,

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Executive Secretary

CC Permanent Correspondents