



**“ Drug Use Management in  
the EU Neighbouring  
Countries:  
The Experience of MedNET  
in Morocco “**

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# Pompidou Group and MedNET

- The **Pompidou Group** is the Council of Europe co-operation platform in the field of drug abuse and illicit trafficking
- It is an Enlarged Partial Agreement of 39 countries open to non Council of Europe member states (eg: Morocco, Israel, Mexico).
- It promotes a balanced, multidisciplinary approach based on valid scientific data covering prevention, treatment, risk reduction and law enforcement to support human rights drug policy
- **Pompidou Group has a gender rapporteur**
- It promotes **co-operation, exchange and two-way transfer of knowledge between countries of the two rims of the Mediterranean Sea (North-South, South-North and South-South co-operation)**

# How did it start?

- Back in the 90s / early 2000
- Scientists of the Mediterranean region gather all the time...
- Little impact on policies
- Poor policies in the field of drug use management
- Drug use not always a priority / No action plans

# The issue was...

- How to link science to policy?
- How to raise awareness in policy makers?
- How to train resources?
- How to get data on the situation?
- How to implement small projects and then make them grow?
- How to come up with sustainable national action plans?
- How to link policy to science?

# The idea was...

- To build a network of scientists and decision makers from different countries from the North and the South
- To make sure those people have strong ties with policy-makers (in some cases, they also are)
- To raise funds
- To mount feasible, efficient and science-based drug use programs
- To train professionals
- To make sure all this is sustainable and has impact

# How?

- Creation of the MedNET: representatives from countries
- Two gatherings per year
- First meeting: project proposals and approval
- Second meeting: follow up and reporting
- Voluntary contributions from European countries / members of the PG
- Recipient: the secretariat of the PG
- Funding of approved projects that originate from the countries themselves

# The example of Morocco

- Back in the early 200, the needs were:
  - Data collection
  - Training and capacity building
  - Treatment programs
  - Harm reduction / OAT programs
  - Law changing
  - National action plans:
    - Prevention
    - Treatment
    - Rehab
    - HR
    - Data collection / research
    - Training
    - Evaluation
  - Research



## Cooperation in the Mediterranean region

- **MedNET** set up in 2006 after start of cooperation in 1999
- **Aim:** promote cooperation, and two-way transfer of knowledge between countries of both rims of the Mediterranean (North South and South-North exchanges) as well as within countries of the Mediterranean (South-South exchanges).
- **Objective** : improve the quality of drug policy and their implementation in all participating countries, emphasising a greater awareness of cultural factors .
- **15 countries** : Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Palestine, Portugal, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey
- **Budget** of voluntary contributions, Annual activity report. Tailored made work programme replying to the country needs.
- Participates in the South Programme, funded by the EU and implemented by the Council of Europe





## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- Co-operation with Morocco began at the Conference on « co-operation in the Mediterranean region on drug use » held in Malta in 1999
- Morocco subsequently participated in MedSPAD, a project launched in 2003, following talks between the Moroccan Minister for Health and the Executive Secretary of the Pompidou Group. A survey was conducted in Rabat in 2005, followed by nationwide surveys in 2009, 2013 and 2017.
- On 1 July 2011, the Kingdom of Morocco officially joined PG. The minister for Health of the Kingdom of Morocco stressed in his letter to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe that « the interest shown by Morocco in acceding (...) is part of this process and testifies to its commitment to contribute to the efforts of the international community ».



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Research

## MedNET activities in which Morocco has participated

### 2006

- Participation in the Conference on the role of research in drug policy development held in Algiers.
- Participation of Morocco in the Ministerial Conference of the PG

### 2007

- Theoretical training in opioid substitution treatment (OST), Rabat
- Practical training in opioid substitution treatment, Paris-Bordeaux
- Visit to France by a delegation from the Moroccan Ministry of Health to study substitution treatment
- Seminar held in Paris to evaluate the OST pilot program in Morocco
- Participation in the international seminar on application of the results of school surveys in West Africa, organized by the UNODC Regional Office in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
- Participation by Morocco in the conference on the role of associations in the prevention of drug abuse, Algiers
- Study visit to the Netherlands on substitution treatment
- Participation in the Pompidou Group Conference on families and prevention, Porto

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OAT training

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Prevention

## 2008

- Hearing given to the Pompidou Group Secretariat in Rabat by the Minister for Health, Ms Yasmina Baddou, who confirmed her commitment to Morocco's action plan within the MedNET network
- MedNET support for a seminar on risk reduction organised by Menahra (Middle East and North Africa Harm Reduction Association)
- Participation by Moroccan experts in colloquies held in Paris in December on sociology and medicine

## 2009

- Creation of a diploma in addictology at the faculties of medicine in Casablanca and Rabat
- Contribution by MedNET to the training of the Arrazi "knowledge hub"
- Tripartite meeting NGOs / policy-makers / researchers, Rabat
- MedSPAD I national survey
- Participation by Morocco in the study on the setting up of a Mediterranean observatory of drugs and drug addiction
- Participation in the MedNET high-level conference

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**National Action plan**  
**HR**  
**training**

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**Capacity building / Data collection  
Data dissemination**



## 2010

- Reducing the risk of HIV and HCV contamination among drug users: advocacy and support workshop for NGOs working in the field of risk prevention among drug users
- Continuation of addictology courses (Rabat and Casablanca)
- Production of prevention material aimed at users, their families and the community
- Regional seminar to prepare the way for setting up national observatories/ resource centers on drugs, 30 November – 2 December, Rabat

## 2011

- On 1 July 2011, the Kingdom of Morocco joined to the PG
- Continuation of the courses in addictology in Rabat and Casablanca
- Dissemination of prevention material aimed at users, their families and the community
- End of the pilot phase in the development of substitution treatment at the three centers in Rabat, Casablanca and Tangiers



## 2012

- Inclusion of opioid substitution treatment in the 2012 national program
- Translation of prevention material into Berber
- Continuation of the addictology courses and placement of the trained persons in treatment and care centers
- Setting up of the first national observatories of drugs and drug addiction

## 2013

- Continuation of the addictology courses in Casablanca and Rabat
- MedSPAD II survey



2014

- Support to the Moroccan observatory of drugs and drug addiction
- Addictology courses in Casablanca and Rabat
- Hosting of a study visit to low-threshold centres
- Participation in regional activities
- Workshop on the fight against trafficking in airports and annual meeting of the Pompidou Group's airports group
- Participation to the MedSPAD Regional Committee
- Participation in the 3rd international symposium on "excessive gambling", Neuchâtel, Switzerland
- Participation in the « *4e colloque international francophone sur le traitement de la dépendance aux opioïdes* », Brussels, Belgium, 18-19 December 2014

## 2015

- Support to the Moroccan observatory of drugs and drug addiction in 2015. First report on the observatory's activities
- Continuation of addictology courses in Casablanca and Rabat
- Training course on “pathological gambling”, Lausanne, Switzerland, 26 to 28 November 2015
- Participation in regional activities
- Participation in MedSPAD Committee
- Contribution to the report by the MedSPAD Committee “A first glance at the situation in the Mediterranean region in relation to the prevalence of alcohol, tobacco and drug use among adolescents”
- Participation in the Pompidou Group's airports seminar, Strasbourg, 17-19 June 2015
- Participation in the first European Conference on Addictive Behaviors and Dependencies, Lisbon



2016

- Support of the Moroccan Observatory of Drugs and Addictions
- Prevention handbook
- MedSPAD III
- Hosting of the « *5e colloque international francophone sur le traitement de la dépendance aux opioïdes* », Rabat, November 30th, December 1st and 2nd 2016

## 2017

- Publication of the second report of the Moroccan National Observatory on Drugs and Addictions (OMDA). MedNET's input was vital in the early stages of the OMDA and continued in 2017. The support provided by MedNET substantially raised the OMDA's profile while helping to secure its long-term sustainability. It also allowed extensive co-operation with the EMCDDA.
- Launched of the first specialized gambling addiction care center following its first general population survey on gambling addiction

## 2018

- Publication of the second report of the Moroccan National Observatory on Drugs and Drug Addiction (OMDA). The support of the network increased the visibility of the Moroccan National Observatory on Drugs and maintained at the same time its long term sustainability. It also made it possible to put in place an extended cooperation with EMCDDA.
- Support of the Congress of the Moroccan Association of Addiction which took place on 19-20 October 2018 in Rabat, Morocco.



## Impact of MedNET on Morocco

- Networking of politicians and fieldworkers
- Focus on harm reduction policy, especially through the introduction of opioid agonist treatment programs
- Encouragement of the evidence-based approach
- Impact of MedSPAD surveys on data collection and the prevention of drug use in the 15-17 age group and beyond (Mesdpad I, II, III and IV)
- Training of skilled personnel through the university diploma courses in addictology and different training courses (France, Switzerland, Italy, Cyprus etc.)
- Support for the concept of users' rights as an integral part of human rights in general
- Support for the Moroccan Observatory of Drugs and Addictions (OMDA) through publication of the 2014 and the 2018 reports
- A sustainable mission for the OMDA



2019

- Setting up of a network of treatment centres in Morocco (REMAD)
- Participation in Medspad regional committee covering 12 countries
- Continuation of the addictology courses in Rabat, Casablanca and Marrakech





## **MedNET's flagship activities**

- Training: university diploma courses in addictology in Rabat, Casablanca and Marrakech.
- Epidemiology / research: technical and financial support for the MedSPAD surveys and encouraging the setting up of the OMDA
- Raising Morocco's profile on the European scene as a pioneer at regional level in the integrated management of drug use and, hence, as a candidate for membership of the Pompidou Group. Morocco duly became a member of the Pompidou Group in July 2011



## **Role of MedNET in raising awareness of drugs policy**

- MedSPAD surveys
- Moroccan Observatory of Drugs and Drug Addiction (OMDA)
- Policy on drugs and addiction is now based on scientific evidence.
- Training of human resources is also part of the strategy pursued by the Ministry of Health.

## **Role of MedNET in data collection, analysis and interpretation and in setting up and supporting a national observatory**

- Seminar on the role of research in drug policy development, with a presentation of the experience gained from the MedSPAD survey in Rabat
- Setting up of the OMDA
- Production of the first and the second OMDA report
- Supporting and ensuring the sustainability of the OMDA



## **Role of MedNET in therapeutic treatment and care in Morocco**

MedNET has supported the introduction of opiate agonist treatment by:

- Organising training seminars in Morocco and study visits in other countries (France and the Netherlands)
- Supporting the harm reduction programme

## **Role of MedNET in prevention in Morocco**

- Producing prevention material aimed at adolescents, psychoactive substance users and families
- Networking with NGOs involved in the prevention of psychoactive substance use
- Organising round tables on prevention
- Setting up a tripartite conference including academics, politicians and NGOs and organising training seminars with them



## Role of MedNET in South-South exchanges

- Sharing information and experience with the countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean
- Participation by Morocco in scientific meetings and round tables in Algeria, Tunisia, Jordan, Egypt and Burkina Faso, with knowledge sharing
- Supporting neighbouring countries in setting up MedSPAD surveys, university courses in addictology and opioid agonist treatment
- Participation by Morocco in the international seminar on application of the results of school surveys in West Africa, organised by the UNDOC Regional Office in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
- Participation by Morocco in the conference on the role of associations in the prevention of drug abuse, Algiers



## Role of MedNET in North-South exchanges

- Sharing experience with European countries
- Training for Moroccan experts on “pathological gambling”, in Lausanne
- Participation by Moroccan experts in colloquies, conferences and seminars held in Europe, e.g. in France, Belgium, Portugal and Switzerland

# Conclusions

- MedNET has contributed to:
  - Networking policy makers and professionals
  - Training professionals and NGO workers in:
    - Prevention
    - Treatment
    - HR and OAT
    - Data collection
  - Mounting and funding academic diplomas
  - Collecting data: Medspad
  - Funding of the Moroccan Observatory on Drugs and Addictions
  - Promoting human rights (drug users and vulnerable groups)
  - Accompanying national action plans

All this in a very flexible,  
smooth, quick, efficient  
and country-need oriented way.

Little money, huge impact

Thank you!  
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