



Innovative in its multidisciplinary structure and wide-ranging activities, the Pompidou Group has had a profound impact on European countries' anti-drug policies for over 30 years. As he retires after 23 years as the Group's Executive Secretary, Christopher Lockett (UK) gives a frank account of past activities and outlines future prospects.

Question: What have been the major changes on the drugs scene in Europe since you arrived at the Pompidou Group in 1985?

Christopher Lockett: We have seen new synthetic drugs flood in and the advent of others that are on the borderline of legality, alongside the recurrence of more traditional drugs such as cocaine and heroin. Patterns of use have also changed: far more people than before have tried drugs, and there are more drug users too. Admittedly we have made much progress as far as problem users and heavy drug addicts are concerned, but we are less well equipped to deal with people dabbling in drugs. As far as the drug trade is concerned, the fall of the Iron Curtain of course brought about changes in trafficking routes, with, in particular, the arrival of synthetic drugs produced in central and eastern Europe. Opiates from the Far East have totally disappeared; the main source is now Afghanistan, from where there is significant flow of drugs to Black Africa, and then up to North Africa and Europe. This is new. Furthermore, Europe used to just import drugs, but it now produces various substances, mainly synthetic ones, and also cannabis.

Question: What do you see as the Pompidou Group's major contributions to anti-drug efforts and the debate on this issue.

Christopher Lockett: In 1971, the idea of getting contributors and experts from different backgrounds to work together in a multidisciplinary fashion was truly revolutionary. When we started doing this, we also invited our member states to remove the barriers between their different departments and bodies. We have also helped European countries, especially the new central and eastern European democracies, to optimise the effectiveness of their anti-drug efforts. The Group was also the first body to start gathering data, as early as 1982. The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, which the European Union has set up in Lisbon, is in very many respects the outcome of our work.

Question: Are the Council of Europe's humanitarian and democratic values well reflected in the Pompidou Group's activities?

Christopher Lockett: These values have always underpinned the Group's activities, but this has become more evident since around 2000, when the member states realised that it was not enough just to have experts' opinions. For example, we have invited groups of young people and drugs users to come and talk about drugs, which was rarely done before. A little later, we set up a committee to examine the ethical issues raised by certain programmes, such as drug testing in schools, which can have immense consequences. More broadly, we believe that drug addiction should not be considered solely from a legal point of view, but as part of public health policy, with rules of professional ethics and measures on treatment and risk reduction. The Group is currently looking into the idea of drawing up a European convention to

promote this approach, and I hope it will succeed. In parallel, and without calling into question the need for criminal proceedings in some cases, we argue that the criminal justice system should be used effectively. In particular I think that prison should only be used in exceptional circumstances; it is never a solution for the rehabilitation of drug users.

Question: How do you see the future of drug policies in Europe and of the Pompidou Group?

Christopher Lockett: The Group must continue being a forum for open debate, but also strengthen dialogue with politicians, whom it should help to inform. Decision-makers must above all be reminded that drug addiction cannot be solved by simple, attention-grabbing measures, but is a phenomenon all the more complicated because it concerns relationships between individuals and society. The ethical issues surrounding drug addiction are also going to become increasingly important, and level-headed thinking is required. For example, what will be the implications of vaccines against certain drugs, or of certain drug tests? Drug abuse is also becoming a global issue, and Europe is one of the rare places in the world where real policies exist to tackle it in a multidisciplinary and comprehensive manner. We must help any countries that ask, particularly those in the Maghreb and Middle East, to develop effective responses to the challenges posed by the development of new forms of drug addiction on their territory. The Maghreb in particular is confronted with a upsurge in heroin use, and we are working in partnership with these countries to meet this challenge. However, we are also co-operating with countries as varied as Lebanon, Egypt and Colombia.

We do realise that our resources will continue to be limited, because drug addiction in Europe is now less visible than before, and governments no longer consider it their top priority since the emergence of major terrorist threats. However, even with fewer resources, we must maintain our motivation and philosophy, which I hope will continue to be based on the place of every individual in our society.