

Pompidou Group

Council of Europe International Cooperation Group on
Drugs and Addictions



Pompidou Group's Policy paper and Expert Report on 'Strategies and regulatory options aimed at reducing risks and harms related to online gaming and online gambling'

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28-29 January 2025, Launch Conference

'Promoting the Mental Health of Children and Youth by
Addressing the Risks of Online Gambling and Gaming'

Key dates



- **1971** – set up as Co-operation Group to Combat Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking in Drugs
- **2021** – revised statute - International Cooperation Group on Drugs and Addictions
- **April 2023** – Expert Group on online addictions was set up - 14 members from the Pompidou Group member states – Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czechia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Israel, Norway, North Macedonia, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Switzerland – with participation of the WHO
- **December 2023** – Expert report ‘Risks and Harms associated with Online Gaming and Gambling’
- **May 2024** – ‘Policy paper on strategies and regulatory options aimed at reducing risks and harms related to online gaming and online gambling’ adopted by member states
- **July 2024** – Committee of Ministers of the CoE *‘invited the Pompidou Group to prepare a draft recommendation on this matter, in consultation with the Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI) and other relevant bodies, as appropriate, for adoption by the Committee of Ministers in 2025.*
- **June 2025** – Presentation of the draft recommendation elaborated by the Pompidou Group to the CDMSI and other relevant bodies and transmission of the final draft by the PG to the Committee of Ministers for adoption
- **End 2025** - Adoption of the recommendation by the Committee of Ministers

- **Why online gaming and online gambling?**

Classified as disorders in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11), WHO

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DEFINITIONS



Online gambling

Gambling is the betting or staking of something of value, with consciousness of risk and hope of gain.

Online gaming

Gaming refers to playing video games that are played on digital devices (e.g., personal computers, gaming consoles, smartphones, virtual reality devices). Online gaming refers to any kind of video gaming conducted on the internet.

Online gambling disorder and Online gaming disorder

According to the WHO, “gambling disorder, predominantly online is characterised by a pattern of persistent or recurrent gambling behaviour that is primarily conducted over the internet and is manifested by: 1. impaired control over gambling; 2. increasing priority given to gambling to the extent that gambling takes precedence over other life interests and daily activities; and 3. continuation or escalation of gambling despite the occurrence of negative consequences.

According to the WHO, the definition of gaming disorder predominantly online resembles the definition of gambling disorder predominantly online, only the term ‘gambling’ is exchanged with ‘gaming’ referring to digital gaming or video gaming

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Risks and harms associated with online gaming and gambling

Report



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EXPERT REPORT – KEY FINDINGS



- Risks and harms associated with online gambling and gaming, in addition to the harm caused to individuals, can be linked to significant economic and societal costs corresponding to a considerable burden of disease in both cases;
- Prevalence estimates for problem online gambling risk range from 2.7% to 6.5% in the adult population and are about 1% among adolescents despite age restrictions. Male gender and younger age are factors consistently associated with online gambling problems;
- The development of online gambling and gaming problems usually results from the interplay of three interrelated factors: (i) the characteristics of the online activity, (ii) the individual's psychological and biological characteristics, and (iii) the environment's characteristics (e.g., family and peer-related factors, cultural context);

EXPERT REPORT – KEY FINDINGS



- Structural characteristics and game mechanics of both online gambling and online video gaming are carefully and intentionally crafted in ways that make the activities as immersive and addictive as possible;
- One of the most striking phenomena is the convergence between gambling and gaming, namely that gambling activities increasingly incorporate video gaming features (the ‘gamification of gambling’), and video games are more and more frequently integrating gambling elements in their gameplay (the ‘gamblification of gaming’);
- The integration of gambling elements in online video games is especially problematic as minors are heavily targeted, and regulations to protect them are completely lacking at the moment;

EXPERT REPORT – KEY FINDINGS



- Lack of proper regulation of online environments;
- Several prevention, treatment, and harm minimisation measures exist for problem gambling; however, their effectiveness for online forms and new populations (e.g., minors, women) is not sufficiently studied, or they are often not effectively implemented;
- Lack of research to guide public policy and regulatory approaches to gambling, including research that assesses the impact on the public good of various regulatory frameworks or evidence regarding the effectiveness of specific compliance requirements.

Policy paper on strategies and regulatory options aimed at reducing risks and harms related to online gaming and online gambling

- Adopted at the 94th Permanent Correspondents' meeting, 30 May 2024
- Provides conceptual guidance to political decision-makers and policy developers who are seeking to develop strategies, action plans, and regulatory frameworks to minimise the risks and harms associated with online gaming and gambling. It complements the 2024 Expert report 'Risks and harms associated with online gaming and gambling'.

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- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Understanding risks and harms**
 - 2.1. Concepts of risks and harms
 - 2.2. Risks and harms of online gambling
 - 2.3. Risks and harms of online gaming
- 3. Developing a strategy**
 - 3.1. Aims and expected impact
 - 3.2. Strategic Objectives (each area includes specific objective, actions, potential indicators)
 - 3.2.1 Raising public awareness
 - 3.2.2 Empowering families and educators
 - 3.2.3. High-quality scientific research
 - 3.2.4. Prevention
 - 3.2.5. Treatment
 - 3.2.6. Harm reduction
 - 3.2.7. The industry's contribution to risk and harm reduction
 - 3.2.8. International governmental cooperation

4. Regulatory options

- 4.1. Online gambling
- 4.2. Online gaming
- 4.3. Applying consumer protection and product safety regulations
- 4.4. Major obstacles and challenges in the implementation of regulations

5. Evaluation and adjustments

- 5.1. Key indicators and verification sources
- 5.2. Monitoring

Appendix I – Overview of options for regulatory approaches, Challenges in introducing and implementing regulatory measures

Appendix II – Making multistakeholder cooperation work

Appendix III – Definition of terms

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