



# HUMAN RIGHTS AND DRUG USE



Duration:  
**6 hours**

**HELP**

**Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals**  
**Council of Europe**



## HUMAN RIGHTS AND DRUG USE

### HELP ONLINE COURSE

Duration: 6 hours

Available for free on the CoE  
HELP e-learning platform

Statement of  
Accomplishment

START COURSE 

Council of Europe  
Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP) Programme | 2025

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<https://www.coe.int/en/web/help/home>

Human Rights and Rule of Law Training  
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## Background

Most European states have been gradually changing their justice approach to drug use and dependence from punitive towards more health and human-rights centred responses. This includes a wider application of non-criminal punishments as alternatives to punishment or conviction, the application of harm reduction services, as well as education and treatment where appropriate. Such approach is aimed at addressing growing health and human rights concerns related to drug use. Nonetheless, the majority of drug policy-related human rights violations, including instances of inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, occur in the criminal justice system. Legal professionals play a major role in preventing these violations.

This HELP course offers a human rights-oriented understanding of drug-related offences. It presents a framework for analysing key concepts and human rights principles relevant for drug policy and practice in the criminal justice system.

## About the course

The course was developed jointly by the Council of Europe's International Cooperation Group on Drugs and Addictions (Pompidou Group) and the Council of Europe HELP Programme ([coe.int/help](https://coe.int/help)) in line with the HELP Methodology, by a Working Group (WG) of international consultants. Human rights and criminal justice professionals, treatment specialists and drug policy experts, as well as representatives of other International Organisations and civil society participated in its development.

The course was developed in **March 2025**.

## Target audience

This HELP course is primarily designed for legal professionals (judges, prosecutors, lawyers) but is also relevant for members of national Human Rights institutions and National Preventive Mechanisms (NPM), decision-makers, policymakers, and practitioners working in the criminal justice system, including prison and probation staff, prison directors and managers.



## Course outline

The course consists of an introductory module and **4 substantive modules**:

	<b>Introductory module</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Welcome video</li> <li>Background</li> <li>Course overview</li> </ul>
<b>1</b>	<b>Definitions, key concepts and sources of human rights</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduction</li> <li>Drugs and harm</li> <li>Treaty norms and standards in human rights</li> <li>Compliance monitoring</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	<b>Human rights and drug use in practice</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduction</li> <li>Duty-bearers with human rights obligations</li> <li>Human rights indicators for drug policies and practice</li> <li>ECtHR case law</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<b>Human rights aspects concerning health and treatment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduction</li> <li>The right to health</li> <li>Treatment standards</li> <li>Treatment options and treatment outcomes</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	<b>Human rights aspects at different stages of the administration of justice</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduction</li> <li>Alternatives to conviction or punishment</li> <li>Promising practices in different stages of the administration of justice</li> <li>Custodial setting and probation</li> </ul>

## How to access the HELP online course

The course is freely available in self-learning format on the CoE HELP e-learning platform. The overall length of the course is of approximately 6 hours and those who complete it in self-learning format can obtain an electronic 'Statement of accomplishment'.

To access the course, you need to have a HELP account. If you haven't created one yet, you can sign up [here](https://www.coe.int/en/web/help/home) - it only takes a few minutes.

