



PROPOSALS TO STATE AUTHORITIES
ON THE SOLUTION OF PROBLEMS
RELATED TO THE CONTROL AND
PREVENTION OF USE OF PSYCHOTROPIC
SUBSTANCE AMONG YOUTH



LITHUANIAN STUDENTS PARLIAMENT
Working Group on Control and Prevention
of Psychotropic Substance Use

Vilnius 2010

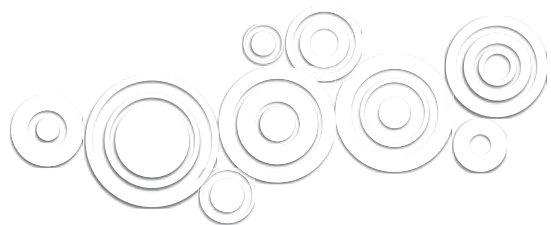


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INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

Lithuanian Students Parliament (hereinafter – LSP) is an institution representing the interests of Lithuanian pupils. It has 95 members – senior pupils from 65 municipalities of Lithuania. They have been democratically elected for a two-year term. LSP debates issues relevant to all pupils, puts forward proposals to state institutions, initiates discussions and implements various projects.

LSP was launched in 2000, and today it is a partner of state authorities which has won recognition for shaping youth policy in Lithuania. Representatives of LSP are invited to participate in various working groups and debates while dealing with issues relevant to youth; their opinion is heard and taken into consideration.

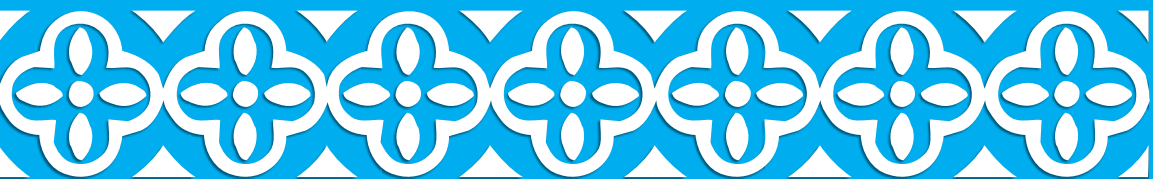
From the very beginning LSP mainly focuses on various educational issues: they continually observe the organisation of state exams and respond to emerging problems, they take an active part in the development and adjustment of the university studies' reform, etc.

In 2009, with the view of expansion of the range of LSP activities and in order to encourage participation of young people in other areas of relevant public policy to, LSP in cooperation with the I Can Live Coalition implemented the project “Strengthening of the Role of Youth in Drug Policy Making and Implementation”. Within the framework of the project, a working group on control and prevention of use of psychotropic substances (hereinafter – the Working Group) was formed of 15 members representing several LSP committees and various towns of Lithuania. The aim of the Working Group was to actively participate in the policy of control of psychotropic substances and prevention of their use among youth.

During the period of September 2009 – October 2010, the members of the Working Group in cooperation with the I Can Live Coalition participated in series of training sessions on dependences and related problems, study trips, meetings with Lithuanian main policy makers and key actors in the field of control of psychotropic substances and prevention of their use, implemented activities promoting better control of psychotropic substances and prevention of their use (e.g. in cooperation with V. V. Margeviciene, Chair of the Commission for Prevention of Drug and Alcohol Addiction of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, a round table discussion with pupils, teachers and professionals “The Problems Related with Drug and Alcohol Addictions and their Prevention among Youth” was organised in Kaunas Municipality; an open letter regarding the Draft Law on Alcohol Control composed and distributed, etc.).

With the help of experts from the I Can Live Coalition, the members of the Working Group have also prepared recommendations to state authorities on possible ways of improvement of control of psychotropic substances and the prevention of their use among youth. You will find the summary of the recommendations in this publication.





PREVENTION OF THE USE OF
PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES IN SCHOOLS:
PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS



PREVENTION OF THE USE OF PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES IN SCHOOLS: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

Prevention of the use of psychotropic substances in schools is a complex of various measures designed to prevent or decrease the use of psychotropic substances. Over the past years many Lithuanian schools have been trying various measures, such as lectures, seminars or other events on the topic of prevention. However, the effectiveness of these measures is doubtful. Based on the 2009 Annual Report from the Drug Control Department under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, the use of alcohol among 15–24 year olds increased, though slightly, during the past 4 years. There is also a higher prevalence of cannabis use among 15–24 year olds¹.

We believe that the present prevention of the use of psychotropic substances in schools is inefficient for the following main reasons:

- ***Unwillingness to recognise the complex nature of the phenomenon of the use of psychotropic substances, particularly drug use, in schools.***

Most schools tend to hide problems related to drug use as they fear negative public reaction and loss of reputation which often results in decrease of the quantity of pupil's vouchers (budgetary allocations per pupil per school).

- ***Prevention is inadequate to age group psychology (or only a small part of it does).***

The majority of preventive measures are of general character, they are not orientated towards the respective age groups. For example, such forms of intimidation as "Smoking kills" or "Smoking causes cancer" are prevailing though their impact on teenagers, unlike on children, is low or insignificant.

- ***Preventive measures are not differentiated according to the degree of dependence on psychotropic substances of various target groups.***

The same preventive measures are applied to non-users and those who experiment with drugs and to those who have already developed dependence. Thus, prevention becomes ineffective because it ignores the characteristics of a particular target group (experience in use of psychoactive substances, the frequency of use, etc.).

- ***Inadequate investments in the marketing of healthy lifestyle and abstaining from use of psychotropic substance.***

Those administering the prevention of use of psychotropic substances and implementing healthy lifestyle programs lack financial support for high-quality, creative projects on prevention and healthy lifestyles as well as for their publicity. For example, we think that the project "Forget About It" carried out by the Drug Control Department under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania was visible to the general public for too short period of time. Experts say that funds allocated to implementation and publicity of effective prevention should equal or even exceed financial allocations to promotion of harmful habits (advertising of alcohol that targets youth).



¹ Annual report 2009. Drug Control Department under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2009 [visited on 16 September 2010]. Internet access at: < http://www.nkd.lt/bylos/dokumentai/leidiniai/2009-pranesimai/NKD_metinis-2009web.pdf>

In school, social educators observe that most preventive programs are designed carelessly, are often limited to the creation of posters, dissemination of petty information on prevention and sporadic actions. Senior pupils claim that junior pupils have to participate in one or two events on prevention once a year. According to them, however, the events are of very questionable quality as they end up in drawing pictures of syringes and skulls and awards to the authors of the best pictures are given.

• Pupils are not being involved in the process of design and implementation of prevention programs.

The majority of prevention programs for pupils are being designed and implemented without consultation with pupils and without their consent which is to the detriment of the quality of these programs, therefore, the programs do not meet the pupils' needs and are unattractive to them. Pupils note that prevention programs are more of a formal than practical character. Despite the fact that pupils receive quite a lot of information on the existence of such programs, they actually have not seen any of them. For example, pupils from Akmenė Municipality point out that the Prevention Group made of several teachers, a social educator and Deputy Principal make all decisions on the implementation of prevention practically on their own while participation of pupils in the decision making process is only declarative.

• Shortage of experts on prevention in schools.

Prevention programs in schools are mostly carried out by teachers who do not have the right qualifications, skills or adequate preparation. Therefore, they lack knowledge, up to date information on prevention issues, etc. Social educators affirm that teachers are not to blame for this because dealing with this topic is not their primary job and is not within their competence. And we agree with them.

• Part of teachers implementing prevention do not receive financial compensation.

Implementation of prevention is seen as an integral part of teaching, although in many instances it requires additional preparation and time, which is not paid for. And this is to the detriment of teaching quality and impact of prevention programs on pupils.

We believe that implementation of the proposals listed below would contribute to the successful prevention:

• Prevention in schools should be implemented by competent specialists who receive adequate compensation, not by teachers. They could be visiting specialists, such as employees of the Drug Control Department under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, Vilnius Centre for Addictive Disorders, etc. or, for a certain term, be on the staff of schools, especially in schools with high prevalence of use of psychotropic substances. This would make the prevention more efficient.

• Subject teachers can contribute to the prevention within their curriculum content – through teaching mathematics, informatics, the Lithuanian language, etc. Prevention should be integrated into lessons via maths problems, writing essays on relevant subjects, etc. This would help to ensure pupils' better awareness of the problem since they will be made to analyse the causes and effects of use of psychotropic substances themselves.

• University curriculum of future psychologists and social workers should include training on prevention and its implementation in schools. This would help prepare the new generation of prevention specialists, which would contribute to the quality of prevention design and implementation.



• ***The system of incentives should be developed to encourage schools not to ignore the problems related to the use of psychoactive substances but to address it.***

• ***The media should be encouraged to report on the progress of schools that recognize and address the problem of drug use and drug dependence.*** This would diminish the fear of school administration to lose prestige and pupil's vouchers (budgetary allocations per pupil per school); in the long run, it will also help the society to slowly overcome prejudice against the problem of drug dependence.

• ***Public authorities should allocate more funds to encourage to abstain from psychoactive substances / to market healthy lifestyles.*** Studies suggest that such investments pay off: savings on treatment, care and rehabilitation of users of psychoactive substances are substantial.

• ***To take over the good experience of other countries and adapt it locally.***

Reference sources:

Annual Report 2009. Drug Control Department under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2009. [visited on 16 September 2010]. Internet access at: < http://www.nkd.lt/bylos/dokumentai/leidiniai/2009-pranesimai/NKD_metinis-2009web.pdf.>

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WAYS OF REINTEGRATION OF PUPILS
WITH DEPENDENCIES AND SOLUTIONS
TO PROBLEMS RELATED TO USE OF
PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES



WAYS OF REINTEGRATION OF PUPILS WITH DEPENDENCIES AND SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS RELATED TO USE OF PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES

In today's society, the complex problem of drug use is becoming a sore point, and schoolchildren are increasingly affected by it. Lithuanian Students Parliament (hereinafter - LSP) Working Group on control of psychoactive substances and prevention of their use is concerned about the current situation. In our view, today the control of psychoactive substances and punishment policy in Lithuania is lacking effective alternatives. Our approach is consistent with the findings of the Eurobarometer survey "Young people and drugs" commissioned by European Commission and carried out in 2008. Measures identified as the most effective ones in the fight against drug use include destruction of illegal distribution network of psychoactive substances (63 percent), effective information and prevention programs (47 percent), treatment and rehabilitation of patients with dependencies (33 percent). This summary outlines the key problems, possible causes and solutions as seen by LSP.

Problems:

1. The system of Children's Socialization Centers (hereinafter – CSC) is ineffective (when working with drug using children or former users).
2. Easy access to psychoactive substances (alcohol, tobacco, drugs) to minors.
3. Informal penalization of drug users, including minors, within community (stigma, restrictions in the labour market, etc.).

1. The problem: CSC system is ineffective (when working with drug using children or former users).

The findings of various surveys suggest that nowadays CSCs are ineffective; their activities are subject to criticism by both schoolchildren and staff members².

1.1. Possible Causes of the Problem:

- 1.1.1. CSCs are isolating and remind of places of detention. The findings of the survey carried out in 2009 by NGO "Global Initiative in Psychiatry" together with its social partners revealed that 29,2 percent of the children interviewed "don't like the treatment and control" while 23,6 percent of respondents "don't like the atmosphere at CSC".

The average term of care provided by CSC is up to 3 years. Such extensive period demotivates people to change, and the isolation hinders the children from development.

- 1.1.2. The role of parents and guardians in CSC activities and coursework is insufficient.³

² External Evaluation of Activities of Children's Socialization Centers. Vilnius: National Agency for School Evaluation, 2010. Analysis of the Situation, Factors and Reasons Causing Offensive Behavior of Children who are Assigned the Moderate Care Measures, 2009. Vilnius: NGO "Global Initiative in Psychiatry", 2009.

³ Analysis of the Situation, Factors and Reasons Causing Offensive Behavior of Children who are Assigned the Moderate Care Measures, 2009. Vilnius: NGO "Global Initiative in Psychiatry", 2009.



1.1.3. There is a shortage of specialist and lack of materials on appropriate methodology⁴.

1.2. Our proposals for possible solutions of the problem:

1.2.1. Introduction of measures aiming at involvement of parents / guardians in the activities of CSCs.

1.2.2. Orientation of CSC towards the family, not the institution model, i.e. making the structure of the centers more family-like (like "SOS Vaiky namai").

1.2.3. Reform of SCS from a closed to open system, i.e. making it more accessible to visitors.

1.2.4. Shorter terms of detention at CSC (at present, the term of detention is up to 3 years).

1.2.5. Better training for CSC staff members.

1.2.6. Development of methodological material for CSC staff members.

1.2.7. Design of effective correction programs and their implementation in CSC.

⁴ The above mentioned source of reference.

2. The problem: high availability of psychotropic substances (alcohol, tobacco, drugs) for minors.

Based on the findings of various surveys, psychotropic substances are easily available to youth in Lithuania. According to the findings of the Eurobarometer survey "Young people and drugs" commissioned by European Commission and carried out in 2008, 87 percent of Lithuanian schoolchildren participating in the survey pointed out that access to tobacco was very easy, 86 percent said that access to alcohol was easy while 40 percent of respondents mentioned easy access to cannabis⁵.

2.1. Possible Causes of the Problem:

2.1.1. Lack of effective fight against suppliers of illegal psychotropic substances.

2.1.2. Lack of effective system of control of suppliers of legal psychotropic substances to minors.

2.1.3. Lack of effective state policies on the reduction of use of psychoactive substances among youth.

2.1.4. Adult tolerance of alcohol consumption by young people.

2.2. Our proposals for possible solutions of the problem:

2.2.1. Focus on targeted fight against drug suppliers for the reduction of availability of psychoactive substances, i.e. law enforcement's measures against organized crime and not drug users to whom social and medical care services should be provided in the first place.

⁵ *Young people and drugs, Flash Eurobarometer 2008*. Directorate General Justice, Liberty & Security and Directorate General Communication, [visited on 19 September 2010]. Internet access at: http://www.nkd.lt/files/Apklausos_ir_tyrimai/Young_people_and_drugs.pdf.



- 2.2.2. Sell alcohol only in specialised liquor stores.
- 2.2.3. Remove children's champagne and other alcohol simulating beverages from circulation.
- 2.2.4. Ban alcohol advertising (including "disguised" advertising⁶) and its attributes as well as both alcohol and tobacco selling in 200-meter radius around schools.
- 2.2.5. Sell Tobacco products in homogeneous packs of the same colour. In our opinion, use of tobacco products would be reduced if the packaging is unattractive to consumers.

⁶ Note: i.e. advertising of alcohol free beer, also sports competitions on the attributes of outdoor cafes (on waiters' uniforms, on the tables, etc.).

3. The problem: informal penalization of drug users, including minors, within community (stigma, restrictions in the labour market, etc.).

Various studies suggest that drug users are among the most discriminated groups in the society. Based on the findings of the survey on social tolerance carried out by the National Health Council in 2005, about 80.4 percent of respondents would choose not to live in the neighbourhood of drug users⁷.

3.1. Possible Causes of the Problem:

- 3.1.1. Lack of information on dependencies within the society.
- 3.1.2. Prevailing myths and false negative stereotypes about dependence problems or drug-dependence patients that hinder the recovery, legal employment possibilities and reintegration of such people into the society.
- 3.1.3. Ineffective system of reintegration of drug users in the society.

3.2. Our proposals for possible solutions of the problem:

- 3.2.1. Changing of social attitudes towards drug users – to invite people to see them as individual patients rather than "druggies".
- 3.2.2. Better and more active dissemination of correct information within the society on the dependence problem.
- 3.2.3. Cooperation among municipalities, educational, health care and law enforcement institutions and their involvement in dealing with the problems related to reintegration of drug users into the society and prevention of use psychoactive substance.

⁷ Evaluation of social tolerance level among health care specialists, educators and social workers. National Health Council. 2005, Vilnius. [visited on 19 September 2010]. Internet access at: < <http://www.galiugyventi.lt/downloads/structure//tolerancijos%20tyrimas.doc>>

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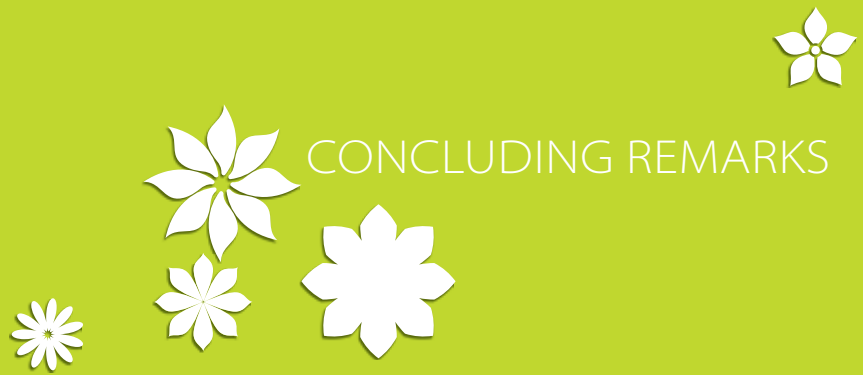
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CONCLUDING REMARKS



CONCLUDING REMARKS

Proposals of LSP with possible solutions for the control of psychotropic substances and prevention of their use were presented at the meeting with the state authorities at the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania on 1 October 2010. The meeting was organised by LSP in cooperation with the Commission for Prevention of Drug and Alcohol Addiction of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania and the I Can Live Coalition within the framework of implementation of the project “The Development of the Youth Role in Drug Policy Making and its Implementation”.

People participating in the meeting: members of the Commission for Prevention of Drug and Alcohol Addiction of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, members of other committees of the Seimas – Committee on Social Affairs and Labour, Committee on Health Affairs, Committee on Education, Science and Culture, decision makers from the Ministry of Health Care, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Social Security and Labour, representatives from Drug Control Department under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, members of other organisations: Vince Vaidevute Margeviciene (Commission for Prevention of Drug and Alcohol Addiction), Vaidotas Bacevicius (Commission for Prevention of Drug and Alcohol Addiction), Ernestas Trunovas (Ministry of Interior), Remigijus Auskelis (Special Education and Psychology Centre), Juratė Martinoniene (Ministry of Health Care), Audronė Astrauskiene (Drug Control Department), Gelena Kriveliene (Ministry of Health Care), Vaidas Bacys (Ministry of Education and Science), Valentinas Stundys (Seimas Committee on Education, Science and Culture), Sigitas Kamauskas (NGO „Tėvai prieš narkotikus“ [“Parents against Drugs”]), Leonarda

Kuodiene (Assistant of K. Uoka, Member of Seimas), Jolanta Ramoniene (Ministry of Social Security and Labour), Antanas Matulas (Seimas Committee on Health Affairs), Mecislovas Zasciurinskas (Seimas Committee on Social Affairs and Labour), Ieva Anusauskaite (Eiciunai Village Centre for Children Engagement).

Electronic version of the proposals were sent to all the participants of the meeting, members of the Committee on Health and Social Affairs, Committee on Education, Science and Culture, Commission for Prevention of Drug and Alcohol Addiction of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania.

