Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 1169 (1991)[1]

Education for health and drugs misuse in the member states of the Council of Europe and the European Community

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly continues to be alarmed that drugs misuse remains a major problem for all West European countries and is already affecting the populations of Eastern Europe : estimates of world-wide sales of illegal drugs approach 1,3 thousand million dollars (1 thousand million ecus) per year.

2. For many years, drug-taking has not been confined to certain vulnerable categories of people, but has spread to all sections of the population, involving more and more age-groups, and is now increasing in sport.

3. In its Recommendation 1085 (1988) on the fight against drugs, endorsed by the Committee of Ministers, the Assembly advocated a ‘‘four-pronged" approach :

3.1. to develop better ways to reduce drug production ;

3.2. to improve international co-operation to tackle trafficking and allow the seizure of traffickers' assets ;

3.3. to undertake urgently more and better actionto reduce demand ;

3.4. to increase the number and quality of treatment facilities, and to research new treatments and techniques.

4. Since supply can never be effectively eliminated, drugs education, from an early age onwards, is the best form of prevention and demand reduction.

5. With this in mind, the Assembly recommended an enhanced role for health education in preventing drug dependency earlier this year ; it welcomes the resolution on health education in schools of the Council of Education Ministers of the European Community (23 November 1988), and the conclusions of the first World Ministerial Summit to Reduce Demand for Drugs (9-11 April 1990).

6. Although all member countries are devoting increasing attention to preventive education as the best means of reducing demand for illegal drugs, education for health -including education about drugs misuse - still requires a higher priority and must be taught in schools in an overall, structured framework as part of the core school curriculum.

7. Although common principles on health education can be agreed at European level, there must be room for adaptation to prevailing cultural and social circumstances. But national and international exchange of information on successful health education programmes can assist development of the most effective policies in drugs education and prevention programmes everywhere.

8. The proper way to position education for health courses is to integrate them within a multidisciplinary approach to social and health problems, encouraging students to recognise the benefits of a generally healthy and drug-free life style, including sport and other active recreational activities.

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1. Assembly debate on 25 September 1991 (18th Sitting) (see Doc. 6472, report of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee, Raporteur : Mr Rathbone). Text adopted by the Assembly on 25 September 1991 (18th sitting).

9. Education for health at an early age is essential. Before drug habits become a temptation or take root, children must experience preventive health education at both primary and secondary educational levels, especially in high-risk environments.

10. Education for health should not stop at school. Employers should take responsibility for informing employees about the adverse effects of legal and illegal drugs at home and at work ; they should provide counselling for misusers, in particular in professions where safety is a key factor.

11. Opportunities should be provided for ‘‘re-education", training or retraining of former addicts to allow them to take up jobs rather than re-enter the drug misuse culture.

12. Training information and health education initiatives against the use of drugs in sport should be increased and particularly directed at trainers and doctors working with sportsmen.

13. Accordingly, the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers :

13.1. reaffirm that education for health is the most crucial element in reducing demand for drugs ;

13.2. recognise the importance of devoting more money and resources to local, national and international programmes of education for health and drug misuse prevention, particularly among young people and in the world of sport ;

13.3. recognise the important role that voluntary and non-governmental organisations have in initiating methods and materials for education for health in local communities ;

13.4. urge all member governments immediately to enlarge and improve their education for health programmes, the drug misuse prevention content of them and the funding support given to them ;

13.5. progress as fast as possible with a comprehensive survey of good health educational practices and policies in all member countries, so that best practice at local and regional levels can be shared and acted upon ;

13.6. promote further European pilot projects on drugs education within programmes of education for health in schools, among parents, professionals and voluntary organisations, and in the workplace ;

13.7. establish and support a means of systematic exchange of information between all member countries and those with special guest status, with a view to establishing and maintaining the most comprehensive and effective national and international strategies on education for health ;

13.8. encourage the highest possible level of co-ordination between public and private services, education establishments and voluntary groups ;

13.9. urgently seek better ways of financing a European investment fund for drugs education programmes in co-ordination with the Council of Ministers and the Commission of the European Communities ;

13.10. ensure that all member states take action to implement the resolution on the role of education in the fight against drugs of the Council of Education Ministers of the European Community (3 December 1990), the resolution on reducing the demand for narcotic and psychotropic substances of the Council of Health Ministers of the European Community (29 November 1990), other relevant resolutions of the European Community and the Council of Europe, and the conclusions of the first World Ministerial Summit to Reduce Demand for Drugs (9-11 April 1990).

14. Furthermore, the Assembly requests the Committee of Ministers to report on actions taken to meet these recommendations, during the Assembly's 44th Session in 1992.