

Recommendation 1750 (2006)¹

Education for balanced development in school

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly believes that an essential task of schools is to ensure the balanced development of pupils, enabling them to adjust to a varied and rapidly changing world. Though their main task is to convey knowledge, schools should also help in preserving and improving the health of pupils and promote health education and universal values. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health not only as the lack of disease and physical defects, but also as a state of full physical, mental and social well-being.

2. The information technology revolution is intensifying the education process. Ensuring that the added pressure does not harm schoolchildren's health is a new task calling for co-operation among politicians, teachers, doctors and other specialists.

3. The Assembly considers health, as well as intellectual development, to be essential ingredients in the overall development of children and young people. The Assembly notes that in some Council of Europe member states the state of health of school and pre-school pupils gives cause for concern. In some countries children suffer from illnesses which, to a certain extent, are linked to the school environment and living conditions, such as spinal deformation, myopia, neurasthenia, nervous exhaustion and swelling of the thyroid gland. The problem of obesity linked to an unbalanced diet in certain European countries is also causing serious concern.

4. Various factors may have a negative effect on children's health, such as social and economic hardship, environmental disturbances and unsuitable school and pre-school infrastructure.

5. Other causes of unbalanced development are linked to risk factors in the school system which have not been sufficiently studied and understood by society, such as ergonomic factors. Risk factors at school affect children's health in complex ways, without necessarily being noticed by teachers, doctors and parents until the symptoms become visible, which may be much later.

6. Many schools in Council of Europe member states successfully practise teaching methods which take pupils' health into account. More specifically, these methods are used in the WHO European network of health-promoting schools. In this respect, the Assembly stresses the importance of continuing and stepping up this co-operation between the Council of Europe, the European Commission and the WHO, which has been going on since 1992.

7. The Assembly expresses deep concern about the health effects of the consumption by young people of alcohol, cigarettes and drugs, and about the increasing violence that affects them. It also refers to its [Recommendation 1169 \(1991\)](#) on education for health and drugs misuse in the member states of the Council of Europe and the European Community. In so far as this problem is also the consequence of educational pressures, it has to be addressed by means of improvements to the education system.

8. In general, a proactive approach should be fostered, in which the following principles are applied:

8.1. only those teaching methods should be used which help to improve children's health or their balanced development and which take their age and individual particularities into account;

1. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 29 May 2006 (see [Doc. 10767](#), report of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education, rapporteur: Mr Anatoliy Korobeynikov).



- 8.2. psychologists, education specialists and doctors should be effectively involved in the development of teaching methods and infrastructures;
 - 8.3. a health culture should be forged through various disciplines, including sex education;
 - 8.4. high-quality physical and sports education should be provided;
 - 8.5. healthy food should be served for school meals;
 - 8.6. every child's health and development should be monitored throughout schooling;
 - 8.7. information on child's health should be gathered and exchanged among member states.
9. The Assembly believes that a health-education component should be incorporated into training programmes for teachers and other school staff. Parents, pupils, psychologists, doctors and social workers should be regularly kept abreast of developments and co-operation between parents and teachers should be improved.
10. The Assembly notes that the media and advertising have become a major influence on young people. The media, particularly television, should be more aware of the importance of children's and young people's health. The media should be encouraged to promote balanced individual development.
11. The Assembly considers that healthy living and the balanced development of schoolchildren should be priorities in Council of Europe member states. Accordingly, it recommends that the Committee of Ministers:
- 11.1. strengthen the WHO European Strategy for Child and Adolescent Health and Development, for example by launching an awareness campaign;
 - 11.2. collect and analyse, in close co-operation with UNICEF, WHO and other interested organisations, basic data on illnesses which may be linked to the school environment and carry out studies on the interdependence of education and health. The findings could then be used by Council of Europe member states to devise national policies;
 - 11.3. consider the possibility of drafting, in close collaboration with other competent international organisations, a European charter to combat youth violence and reinforce existing mechanisms;
 - 11.4. identify, study and promote best practices in health protection in the school environment;
 - 11.5. invite the governments of members states to:
 - 11.5.1. organise initial and in-service teacher training to include the health dimension in teaching;
 - 11.5.2. pay special attention to protecting the health of immigrant children, taking into account their low level of social protection, the language barrier and the need for them to adapt to a new social and geographical environment and climate.