

## Prevention as a basis for effective anti-drugs policy

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**Abstract:** The paper presents models and projects for the prevention of drug abuse among young people. Analyzes the factors that promote social and cultural development of the individual.

**Keywords:** drug, prevention, family, protection, project, program.

## Zapobieganie jako podstawa polityki skuteczna antynarkotykowej

**Abstrakt:** W artykule przedstawiono modele i projekty na rzecz zapobiegania narkomanii wśród młodzieży. Analizuje czynniki, które sprzyjają rozwojowi społeczno-kulturowej jednostki.

**Słowa kluczowe:** narkotyki, zapobieganie, rodzina, ochrona, projektu, programu.

Prevention is the major orientation of state policy aimed at combating narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances and their trafficking. Prevention of **narcotism** as a whole is a complex system of different measures and on universal social level it is carried out by progressive development of the society. Narcotism is a social phenomenon, conditioned by present demand for illicit drugs among certain share of population. Narcotism is interpreted as an aggregate of modes, methods, actions connected with cultivation, producing, trafficking and use of narcotic drugs.

Prevention is tied up with the most important and long-run aspects of social activities, principal measures for economical development, ensuring rights, freedoms and interests of citizens, care for culture and morals, law enforcement and welfare. Those activities have large-scale goals and profound impact on crime, because their social oriented character create provisions for limitation of drug-related crime.

Preventive measures of general character lead to reduction to minimal level in numbers of drug-users, who are principal group of risk in this case. Therefore the one and only strategic way for drug counteraction should be the way of social progress, promoting the development of individual as a creative life-loving personality, as opposed to alternative of destruction-oriented personality.

Prevention as a positive correction in society's moral values means prevention of mass-scale drug dependencies.

Inasmuch as **moral values** (responsibility, good and evil, justice, virtue, honor, orderly behavior, selflessness, valor, conscience, etc.) are a variety of social and cultural phenomena, the objects for prevention are, first of all, children, teenagers, youth as a whole and individually.

Importance of prevention as a basis for state's restrictive anti-drug policies is vividly demonstrated by the formula of drug addiction risks introduced by the prominent Swedish scientist and public figure **Nils Bejerot**, who has dedicated his life to fight with drugs.

$$C = S \times E$$

The risk that the individual will commence to use the drug (C) is a derivative from the susceptibility of the individual (S) multiplied by exposure to drug culture (E). The susceptibility of the individual (S) is the result of a large number of individual factors such as sex, age, social situation, previous experience, etc. The exposure to drug culture (E) also depends on a large number of factors such as: geographic location, affordability of drugs, social environment, pressure from drug dealers, legislation, state willingness to combat drugs, social maturity of the society.

Prevention helps to minimize the risk. **Ernesto A. Randolfi**, Ph. D., professor in Montana State University (USA) has developed a Community Prevention Model [1] that points the following prevention realms: community, school, family, peers, individuals. In the Risk and Protective Factors Model he marks out their principal descriptions:

- Risk factors predict substance abuse and protective factors can buffer risk factors;
- Risk and protective factors have cumulative effect;
- Risk and protective factors occur in communities, families, schools, and individuals and are subject to change;
- Risk and protective factors can be influenced by individual, family, school, and environmental change strategies.

To prevent substance abuse, one should reduce risk factors and increase protective factors throughout a child's life. The methodology of prevention model is based both on formulating basic community risk and protective factors, as well as crucial aspects of prevention strategies. The author points out following principal risk factors: laws and ordinances are unclear or inconsistently enforced, norms are unclear or encourage use, alcohol and other drugs are readily available to minors, unemployment is high, level of economic deprivation is high, there is a lack of strong social institutions and monitoring of youth activities. Another risk factor is inadequate media portrayals, including misleading advertising and pro-use messages.

Trying to analyze principal factors named by *E. Randolfi* as affecting the narcotization of society one should mention their plurality, interdependence with social development, rate of individual's involvement in social relations, productive, management and other types of positive activities. Narcotization, as the authors see it, is a degree of drug abuse penetration in certain social segments, having an epidemic character and destructive orientation. It has a negative impact on social, economical, legal, political, moral and spiritual foundations of society. We think

that here we find a question of methodology, namely the choice of subject of investigation – social processes that are under way in modern society. That is of great importance, because evaluation of dynamics and social impact of phenomena under consideration gives an opportunity to form a basis for comprehensive prevention measures in state counter-drug activities.

*E. Randolfi* points out the following community and society protective factors: laws and ordinances are consistently enforced, opportunities exist for community involvement, community religious composition, informal social control, policies and norms encourage non-use, community service opportunities available for youth, resources (housing, healthcare, childcare, jobs, recreation etc.) are available. Protective factors also include availability of comprehensive risk focused programs for parents of children and adolescents, early childhood and family support programs, existence of widely supported community prevention efforts).

*E. Randolfi* picks out six prevention strategies, each one of them having specific priorities:

*First* – information dissemination. The strategy is based on preventive use of television and radio in choice air times and is complimentary to other prevention approaches;

*Second* – prevention education. The strategy is founded on interactive approaches that engage target audience in educational process thus making it more efficient. Besides that strategy implies peer-led components and two sets of workshops that work to improve parent skills along with adolescent skills;

*Third* – alternatives. The strategy implies involvement of high-risk youth who may not have adequate adult supervision in community services. The strategy is considered to be a part of a comprehensive prevention plan;

*Fourth* – community-based processes. The strategy means successful partnership of prevention subjects, with paid coalition staff operating as resource providers and facilitators;

*Fifth* – environmental strategy. Examples of the strategy include excise taxes, enforcement of minimum purchase age laws, increasing the minimum purchase age for alcohol;

*Sixth* – problem identification and referral. In the framework of the strategy there are provided accurate estimates of conflict situations, avoidance of youth exposure to more problematic substance abusers, promotion of family values and status, providing necessary support to it (family therapy).

Recent American studies in prevention indicate, that constant prevention efforts among youth really work.

Another positive example of state-supported prevention program comes from **Iceland**. The large-scaled program Drug-free Iceland was from the outset given a specific time-frame (1997–2002). The purpose of

*Drug-free Iceland* was to improve prevention activities among **teenagers**, averting them from the use of alcohol and illegal substances. The main goal was to unite the nation in its combat against drugs, raise motivation in preventive work, and launch a number of projects and actions [2]. The program was a result of cooperation between state bodies and NGO's.

The method of implementation, that achieved high level of social efficiency, pursued following directions:

- 1) Mobilize society as a whole in the struggle against drugs:
  - a) Contribute to changed attitudes towards young people's drinking and reducing the use of alcohol among children and young people;
  - b) Join forces against drug use in educational, health, social and leisure hour's areas.
- 2) Preventive work and education, concentrating on carefully prepared education about drug matters for children and young people, working on more targeted information for parents or children at elementary school age (In Iceland from 6 to 16 years of age), for teachers, instructors, trainers and others working with children and young people.
- 3) Activation of non-governmental organizations, supporting the activities of NGO's, encouraging the forming of goals and measures in anti-drug matters.
- 4) Cooperation with parent's organizations, supporting the participation of parents in anti-drug work.
- 5) Encouraging improved assistance to young people in risk groups, strengthening the support and specialized service for young people aged 16–18, including services to young families.
- 6) Organizing cooperative work groups against drugs nationwide and in the communities, including:
  - a) An active anti-drug work encouraged in communities all around the country;
  - b) Object oriented projects against drugs in communities and cities under a common motto.
- 7) Encouragement of active and powerful cooperation between customs and law enforcement in the anti-drug work.

The Icelandic anti-drug project helps to grasp and underline the novelty of approaches and programs, that were realized to strengthen social, legal, family culture, social relations, formulate the priorities in evolution of nation as a whole. The experience of Iceland is of special value, because the organizers managed to engage in drug prevention activities diverse social and age groups, ministers, members of parliament, local and municipal authorities. Following aspects of the five-year program deserve particular mentioning:

- a) A campaign introducing the rules regarding how long teenagers are allowed to stay out in the evening. Parents of 13–15 years old children were provided through communities with magnetic cards on which

there were printed the rules regarding how long teenagers could stay out in the evening. Parents were encouraged to respect and follow these rules. A 3-minute long video on the importance of respecting the rules of time spend out of home in the evening was produced and presented on the television channels in-between the programs. People's reaction to the campaign was positive and the police claimed that it had resulted in fewer teenagers being outside late at night;

- b) The promotional campaign "Traveling together – going together", including re-consideration the arrangements of traditional outdoor festivals including the agreement that the number of teenagers who are not accompanied by their parents at the festivals should be limited and such festivals should be organized with the family as whole in mind;
- c) The project "The Family together at Turning Points", aimed at lessening the "party-feeling" sensed by people, especially among teenagers and urging the families to spend time together celebrating special events (such as national holiday on June 17, turn of the year, etc.). The campaign had a prominent promotional support, including the distribution of postcards to every home in the country pointing out to parents that they should spend their time with their children;
- d) The project aimed at fighting the use of alcohol among teenagers. Promotional posters were placed in liqueur stores all over the country, encouraging people not to do a bad deal that is not to buy alcohol for children and teenagers. Their text read in three ways:

**Don't do a bad deal!**

Buying alcohol for teenagers is a legal offence!

**Don't do a bad deal!**

Teenagers want clear messages – let's not buy alcohol for them!

**Don't do a bad deal!**

Intoxicated teenagers are in danger!

A collaborative group consisting of representatives from the Organization of High-School Students, The State Alcohol and Drug Prevention Council, Drug-free Iceland, The Reykjavik Police Force and Home and School public foundation in collaboration with The State Wine, Spirit and Tobacco Monopoly initiated a campaign fighting the use of alcohol among teenagers. The campaign was aimed especially at the parents of teenagers in high schools as well as other adults. There was close cooperation with students in high schools. The Women's Youth National Team in Handball along with various other young people distributed postcards with advice for parents and other adults. The postcards, which were distributed in liqueur stores, contained a message where parents were asked to support the teenagers and set clear limits for them to follow by not providing them with alcohol or premises for their drinking. It

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was also pointed out that parents must be able to rely on other adults not buying alcohol for their children or providing them with a place for drinking alcohol or using drugs. Teenagers in high school designed the postcard;

- e) Promotional campaign against the use of alcohol among teenagers, aimed directly at the age group of 13–15 years, and involving in its preparation and actualization teenagers of the same age group. The objective of the campaign was to get teenagers to reflect on these issues, decrease their use of alcohol and change their attitude towards the harmfulness of alcohol. The project involved a number of press conferences and interviews with teenagers, revealing the fact that a large number of teenagers decided not to drink alcohol. The project was well publicized in media, involving television commercials, radio announcements, posters and advertisements in youth news-bulletins and magazines. For example the teenage magazine *Smellur* has published a number of anti-drug slogans: *Keep Your Memory – Forget the Hashish, You'll be a heap of Hashish, We Know What We Want – We Know How to Say No, I Don't need a Drink*;
- f) Youth project seeking inspiration from active young people and trying to get a positive picture of what young people are doing today;
- g) Cooperation with the police on increased surveillance at restaurants and bars serving alcoholic beverages.

A number of above mentioned prevention projects, combined with new initiatives is under way in Iceland today. *Drug-free Iceland* project has definitely shown that prevention among youth can be successful provided that the following three indispensable conditions are observed:

*First:* A governmental policy sending out a clear message that the use of drugs will never be tolerated and that every measure will be taken to combat the use of illegal substances;

*Second:* Access to rehabilitation;

*Third:* Provisions of law state clearly that the importation, distribution and selling of illegal substances are subject to heavy penalty.

The program *Drug-free Iceland* is one of the best examples of the message by the Icelandic government, that illegal substances will not be tolerated.

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