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SUBSTANCE ABUSE DEPARTMENT

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**Prevention of substance abuse  
among young people in  
Central and Eastern Europe**

Report of the technical review meeting

Warsaw, Poland, 8-9 July 1998



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SOCIAL CHANGE AND MENTAL HEALTH  
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



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## **Abstract**

In 1997, a special project *Prevention of Substance Abuse Among Young People in Central and Eastern Europe* was initiated by WHO's Substance Abuse Department (SAB). The project represents a major initiative to develop a comprehensive and coordinated response to primary prevention of substance abuse in young people in seven countries in Central and Eastern Europe - Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia. Each country represents a project in its own right but the common aims and objectives of the country initiatives are linked into the broader project. The project has a strong emphasis on national capacity building and supports the empowerment of local resources. It also seeks to build networks for exchanging information between the seven countries.

The project promotes the establishment of National Task Forces and preparation of National Strategies addressing primary prevention of substance abuse in each of the seven countries to guide national priorities and selection of priority projects.

In July 1998 SAB organized a Technical Review Meeting in Warsaw, Poland involving representatives of all seven countries. The meeting served as a platform to review progress made in the formation of National Task Forces and the preparation of National Strategies; to provide technical assistance on the systematic collection, interpretation, reporting and application of substance use related data; and to encourage exchange of information among the seven countries. This report provides a summary of the proceedings and outcomes of the Technical Review Meeting.

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## **Opening of the meeting**

The Technical Review Meeting organized under the WHO Programme on Substance Abuse (PSA)<sup>1</sup> Prevention of Substance Abuse among Young People in Central and Eastern Europe Project was held in Warsaw, Poland on 8 - 9 July 1998. The Meeting was organized in consultation and close cooperation with the Institute of Psychiatry and Neurology, Warsaw, Poland, a WHO Collaborating Centre for Research and Training in Mental Health.

The consultation was opened by Dr. Andrzej Zbonikowski, WHO Liaison Officer for Poland. Dr Zbonikowski welcomed the participants from the seven countries, along with his colleagues from WHO Headquarters. He indicated that adolescence and young adulthood were the periods most associated with the onset of substance use worldwide. European studies had shown that more than 20 percent of young people in cities had tried cannabis, and at least half of those who report drinking alcohol started before the age of 15. Up to 30 per cent of European young people smoke, with the majority of them commencing the habit by the age of 19.

Dr Zbonikowski indicated that the serious health consequences associated with substance use show a clear need for initiatives targeted towards young people. The objective of the meeting, to assist with developing and implementing innovative strategies and models for preventing substance-related health and social problems among young people, will therefore be helpful for all the participating countries. Finally, he wished the participants a fruitful and pleasant stay in Warsaw.

## **Attendance**

Participants from the following countries were present at the Technical Review Meeting: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Slovakia (A detailed list is attached as Annex 1). A representative from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Poland attended as an observer. Ms Leanne Riley, Ms Diane Widdus and Mr Martin Donoghoe represented the WHO Programme on Substance Abuse, WHO Headquarters, Geneva. Dr Jacek Moskalewicz from the Institute for Psychiatry and Neurology, Poland and Dr Matthew Hickman of the Centre for Research on Drugs and Health Behaviour, UK were also in attendance as temporary advisors (A directory of all attendees is attached as Annex 2).

## **Adoption of the agenda and organization of work**

Introductory remarks were shared by Dr Olaf Mejer-Zahorowski, Director of the National Bureau for Drug Addictions, Poland, welcoming the representatives from the seven countries and from WHO and UNDP.

Following the official opening, the following officers to the Technical Review Meeting were nominated and elected:

Chair	Dr Olaf Mejer-Zahorowski, National Bureau for Drug Addictions, Poland
Vice-Chair	Dr Tarmo Kariis, Ministry of Social Affairs, Estonia

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<sup>1</sup>In 1998 the WHO Programme on Substance Abuse (PSA) was renamed the WHO Substance Abuse Department.

Rapporteurs Dr Štefan Matula, Research Institute of Child Psychology and Patopsychology, Centre of Education and Psychological Prevention, Slovakia  
Mrs Eleonora Nesheva, National Centre for Addictions, Bulgaria

Subsequently, the Technical Review Meeting adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the meeting and workshop.
2. Introductory remarks.
3. Review of the objectives, scope and purpose of the meeting and workshop.
4. Presentation of progress on work of National Task Forces by participants.
5. Overview of comprehensive programming for primary prevention of substance-related health and social problems among young people.
6. Review of essential aspects of strategic planning and key components of a National Strategy on the Prevention of Substance Abuse Among Young People.
7. Exploration of ways to encourage participation of young people.
8. Identification of ongoing technical assistance needs.
9. Closure of the Technical Review Meeting.

A presentation by Ms Leanne Riley of WHO, Programme on Substance Abuse, Geneva, Switzerland provided an overview of the objectives and scope of the Technical Review Meeting and the Epidemiology Workshop which would follow the Meeting. The objectives were the following:

- To review and facilitate progress related to: (i) formation and functioning of National Task Forces; (ii) assessment of the basic situation and needs in relation to substance use by young people in each of the seven countries participating in this project; (iii) development of National Strategies on Prevention of Substance Abuse among Young People; (iv) participation of young people in the work of National Task Forces; and (v) selection of priority projects.
- To provide technical assistance on the systematic collection, interpretation, reporting and application of data on the prevalence, nature and consequences of substance abuse by young people, with particular attention being given to qualitative research methods and rapid assessment tools.
- To inform the development of a training programme on the application of the WHO Guide to Drug Abuse Epidemiology.

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