



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
13 November 2024

English only

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## Commission for Social Development

Sixty-third session

10–14 February 2025

**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: Priority Theme: “Strengthening solidarity, social inclusion and social cohesion to accelerate the delivery of the commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development as well as the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”**

**Statement submitted by Inštitut za raziskave in razvoj “Utrip” (Institute for Research and Development “Utrip”), a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council\***

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## **Statement**

The 63rd session of the Commission for Social Development (CSocD63) offers an important opportunity to address the pressing need to foster solidarity, inclusion, and cohesion as we advance the commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration and the 2030 Agenda. A critical area within this agenda is addressing youth risk behaviours – specifically, substance use – which poses a significant threat to social resilience, individual development, and community cohesion.

### **The Importance of Evidence-Based Prevention in Addressing Youth Substance Use**

The necessity of evidence-based prevention strategies in addressing youth substance use cannot be overstated. These strategies provide a robust framework for fostering resilient, healthy, and engaged youth communities. Effective prevention initiatives protect young people from behaviours that may hinder their long-term well-being and life prospects, including physical and mental health challenges, social exclusion, and increased risk of criminal involvement. In today's interconnected world, safeguarding youth from these risks is not solely a national concern; it is a shared global responsibility with direct implications for the social and economic health of our societies.

### **Social Inclusion and Cohesion as Pillars of Prevention**

Youth substance use often stems from socio-economic stressors, such as poverty, social exclusion, family instability, and restricted access to education and employment. Lacking supportive social networks, young people may resort to substance use due to isolation, peer pressure, or limited engagement in constructive community activities. It is thus essential to create inclusive, cohesive communities where young people feel valued and supported. Social policies that provide alternatives to substance use foster environments conducive to resilience and positive development, encouraging youth to make healthier choices and build stronger, more connected communities.

### **Evidence-Based Strategies for Effective Prevention**

Effective substance use prevention programmes must be grounded in evidence-based approaches that have been shown to reduce youth substance use. These approaches include social-emotional learning (SEL) programmes, peer mentoring, and family-centred interventions that enhance life skills, foster family and community support, and address the socio-economic roots of substance use. For maximum impact, these interventions must be culturally sensitive, inclusive, and adaptable to local contexts, ensuring they resonate with the communities they serve.

### **The Role of Youth Participation in Prevention Efforts**

A critical factor in the success of prevention programmes is the active involvement of youth in their design, implementation, and evaluation. Programmes that reflect young people's perspectives and lived experiences are more likely to gain their trust and engagement. When young people are involved meaningfully, they become agents of change within their communities, strengthening social cohesion and fostering a sense of shared responsibility for collective well-being.

### **Incorporating International Frameworks and Initiatives**

The importance of early prevention is underscored by the 2022 resolution of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), which emphasizes the need for early and evidence-based prevention measures to address youth substance use. Additionally, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) launched the CHAMPS initiative, aimed at empowering children and youth through the promotion of health, empowerment, and resilience. These frameworks provide critical guidance for member states and communities working to create effective, sustainable prevention initiatives and reinforce the global commitment to supporting youth and reducing risk behaviours.

### **Aligning Prevention Efforts with the Sustainable Development Goals and the Copenhagen Declaration**

Addressing youth substance use prevention directly supports several Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 3 (health and well-being), SDG 4 (quality education), and SDG 16 (peaceful and inclusive societies). Preventative measures align with the Copenhagen Declaration's principles by tackling poverty, promoting dignity, and expanding equitable opportunities. By investing in evidence-based prevention programmes, we contribute to these global commitments while empowering young people to lead healthier, more productive lives.

### **Conclusion**

Evidence-based prevention in youth substance use is essential not only as a public health intervention but as a cornerstone of social inclusion, cohesion, and resilience. By prioritizing these efforts and engaging young people in the process, we can build communities that support youth empowerment and development, creating pathways away from risk behaviours and towards fulfilling, meaningful futures. This commitment to prevention is vital to achieving the aims of the Copenhagen Declaration and the Sustainable Development Goals, laying a strong foundation for shared progress and prosperity.

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