

## Proposal for Prevention Advice

As a result of surveys and online monitoring on the use of synthetic cannabinoids and the information exchange with several prevention organisations, this proposal for prevention advice was developed. A key finding is that the Internet plays an important role for the users of new psychoactive substances. For this reason, prevention work should mainly be online-based.

- **Prevention websites**, primarily addressed to young people, should offer credible, regularly updated information on legal highs to get access to potential and experienced drug users.
  - There should be some kind of easy-to-find basic information, focusing on acute side effects and overdose symptoms, directed to inexperienced youthful (potential) users, and a section containing further information for more experienced users.
  - In particular, the publication of results of the toxicological analyses of synthetic cannabinoids and herbal mixtures plays an important role to improve the credibility, the stickiness and the perception of the website.
  - Anecdotal reports on the website about effects of synthetic cannabinoids by users could raise awareness regarding the specific risks and harms of these substances.
  - Prevention websites should also function as an information source for parents, teachers and experts.
  - An innovative form of secondary prevention could be **online counselling** for legal high users. The online counselling tool should provide anonymous access.
  - These prevention measures should be accompanied by staff with expertise in chemistry and/or toxicology.
  - In addition, visitors should be offered the option to access an immediate counselling using a **telephone hotline** and find contact addresses and links to outreach clinics and similar local institutions on the website.
- Prevention programmes should follow a **peer-oriented approach** providing access to (techno) party scenes and other drug user populations.
- A new type of prevention work could be an 'outreach' social work in user forums, so called **webwork**. This includes professional advice on risks, warnings concerning critical substances or user trends and offers for online counselling.
- **Workshops** for employees in the drug prevention field could raise the awareness for the topic and provide information on characteristics of the phenomenon of synthetic cannabinoids.
  - Employees of outreach and treatment services should be familiar with the topic so that they can deal with it adequately when required. In order to gain more evidence and knowledge on the use and the users of synthetic cannabinoids, it is crucial that the staff of drug prevention and treatment services ask for these new substances in counselling interviews.
- The **exchange of knowledge** plays an important role to deal with this relatively new phenomenon to share the latest updates of new developments. Therefore, a central internet resource containing all relevant information that can be updated by relevant scientists should be established.
- Prevention work should focus on creating **realistic perceptions** of synthetic cannabinoids use: It should refer to the existing representative data instead of anecdotal or hearsay evidence that tends to overestimate the phenomenon.