

## **FIT IN – A NONGOVERNMENTAL PROGRAMME TO PREVENT ALCOHOL AND DRUG - RELATED PROBLEMS IN YOUTH IN CSFR**

Political change in CSFR in November 1989 brought about new challenges as well as new possibilities. The new problems in our field are the increased availability of alcoholic beverages and other drugs, and the increased recklessness of these advertising and selling of these. In addition social change and social stress may increase the already high level of alcohol consumption among the population.

The new possibilities include the interest of industry and various corporations to counteract the negative impact of alcohol and drugs on the labour force and especially the freedom to form non-governmental organizations. These NGOs have a long standing tradition in this country (so called Temperance Clubs in the 19th century, Czech and Slovak Abstinence Union were abolished three times during World War II, after communist putsch, and after Soviet invasion in the 1968).

The most effective NGO activity in this field after November 1989 is the project FIT IN. Let me briefly introduce its theoretical principles, resources, and activities. I think that experience we gathered can be useful to other participants of this workshop, these will be summarized at the end of this paper.

### **Theoretical background**

Let me briefly explain the meaning of the „FIT IN“. It can be understood as being „O. K. inside“ or „to be well“. This state (goal) may be achieved by positive alternatives to alcohol and other drugs. As you know „fit in“ means in English to be suitable. Our programme intends to provide specific messages and services to different target populations which are suitable to their specific needs. We also want to use methods of proven efficacy, like the element of peer intervention, wherever possible. Peer intervention is based on the fact that the health promoting message is accepted better if it comes from the person of the similar age and/or social and occupational group. We use this principle in our publications

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extensively – e.g. the teenage girl is the bearer of positive alternatives in our science fiction story for teenagers „The Secret Report from the Planet X. People with alcohol-related problems (including young ones) give advice about overcoming alcohol related problems in our self-help manual for problem drinkers, and we try to include the peer principle when cooperating with mass media.

We consider it both theoretically correct and practical to prevent alcohol and drug related problems in children and young people together. Methods of primary prevention of alcohol and other drug abuse in youth are identical or similar. Beside this, the sensational and romantic exclusiveness of drugs can be avoided in this way.

### Organization of the Programme

The Prague firm Sportpropag kindly accepted the organizational and technical aspects of the programme. It cooperates closely with the team of experts including the author of this paper. Beside the organizational and financial support of the Sportpropag, various firms, insurance companies and banks sponsored our activities. Recently FIT IN has started to provide paid services which will contribute to its free of charge activities.

### Experience with FIT IN Programme

Our publications has become popular in, and well accepted by the general public including teachers and health professionals. On the other hand the attendance of meetings and „live“ programs organized by FIT IN was not so good. It seems that people in our country are rather willing to read and more prone to practice something privately than to be actively involved in prevention outside their homes. It may be in connection both with the totalitarian past and the stigmatizing character of alcohol and drug related problems. Hopefully this will change. We have to take into account the present reality and that is why we are especially committed to developing and publishing self-help manuals and to cooperation with the media.

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### The Review of FIT IN Activities

1990

TV series „Yoga against Stress“ simultaneously published in a popular journal. Official start if the programme with the presence of pop-music and media.

1991

Publication of the following materials:

„10 steps how to help your child to say NO to alcohol and drugs“ (adapted from English – 2 editions);

The shortened version of the above mentioned publication „Secret report from the Planet X“ – Science-fiction story for teenagers offering positive alternatives to alcohol and drugs;

Information about Alcoholic Anonymous for the general public

„Is it possible to drink moderately?“ A leaflet how to drink in a controlled way

„Alcohol, Drugs, and Driving“ – A leaflet for drivers

One afternoon with pop-music, parachutists, etc. for school children

Two times in TV, participation in radio programmes, many articles in newspapers and journals.

1992

Anonymous group and individual counselling for women with alcohol and drug related problems

Publication of following materials:

A booklet about fetal alcohol syndrome for physicians and nurses (translation from English);

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The 3rd edition of 10 steps how to help your child to say NO to alcohol and other drugs (adapted from English);

Am I concerned as well? An original self-help manual for problem drinkers

An original booklet for teachers

One day workshop about the prevention in families

Continuing cooperation with mass media including TV, two press conferences.

Plans for the near future:

A book for parents how to prevent and how to deal with alcohol and drug related problems in children (and original self-help manual; in press).

### **S u m m a r y**

The experience with nongovernmental preventive programme FIT IN is summarized. It seems that people in CSFR are rather willing to read and prone to practice something privately than to be actively involved in prevention outside their homes. That is why we are especially committed to developing and publishing self-help manuals and to cooperation with media.

FIT IN – nevládní program prevence problémů působených alkoholem a drogami v ČSFR

### **S o u h r n**

V článku shrneme své zkušenosti s nevládním preventivním programem FIT IN. Lidé u nás jsou v současnosti ochotnější přijmout tištěné informace a praktikovat v soukromí spíše, než se v prevenci veřejně angažovat. Proto jsme se také v prevenci zaměřili více na přípravu a publikaci svépomocných příruček a spolupráci se sdělovacími prostředky.

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