

Sanela Talić, Institute for Research and Development “Utrip”, Slovenia

The World Drug Day is another great reminder for us about all missed opportunities in the previous years regarding prevention policy and practice. Those missed opportunities are not due to the lack of committed and motivated prevention professionals, but rather the lack of commitment of other important stakeholders (such as policy and decision makers) in terms of written strategies and action plans to support and finance evidence-based prevention.

The 2nd updated edition of the International Standards on Drug Use Prevention from UNODC and WHO (2018) is an example of such a commitment of prevention professionals in order to provide scientific knowledge about what works and what doesn't work in prevention and together with other existing documents it serves as a guideline where to invest.

Surprisingly, only 3 % of health spending goes to prevention, and 97 % to treatment and care. 3 % is very small amount for what prevention really is about. It is not just talking about drugs and harms because of the drug use, but particularly about healthy and safe development of children and youth.

This corresponds to WHO Constitution (1946) that states “that every human being has a fundamental right for the highest attainable standards of health.” Understanding health as a human right creates legal obligation on Member States to ensure access to timely, acceptable and affordable health care including quality prevention programmes and other interventions.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 33) talks about children and drug use – “governments should use all means possible to protect children from the use of drugs and from being used in the drug trade.”

So, investing in quality evidence-based prevention directly means the implementation of this article. We therefore encourage you (policy and decision makers) to invest more in preventions, because prevention science is on your side even when talking about money – every USD spent on evidence-based prevention brings back from 4 up to 56 USD.

And remember, investing in safe and healthy development of children and youth means investing in safe and healthy ageing of all of us who are here today.