

Second Edition of the International Standards on Drug Use Prevention

Concept Note

Background and Mandates

In 2013, UNODC launched the International Standards on Drug Use Prevention (later: the Standards), in the context of the 56th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in March 2013, where the Standards were circulated as a Conference Room Paper (E/CN.7/2013/1). These Standards summarize the globally available scientific evidence, describing interventions and policies found to be effective in preventing drug use, substance abuse and other risky behaviours, outlining their rationale and characteristics. Concurrently, the global International Standards identify the major components and features of an effective national drug prevention system. The Standards build on the work of many other organizations (e.g. EMCDDA, CCSA, CICAD, Mentor, NIDA, WHO) which have previously developed standards and guidelines on various aspects of drug prevention. The Standards, and the related annexes, are available online at www.unodc.org/unodc/en/prevention/prevention-standards.html.

The Standards aim foremost to assist policy makers and other decision makers worldwide to develop programmes, policies and systems that are a truly effective investment in the future of children, youth, families and communities. In addition, it has proven to be the key reference document for UNODC internally, guiding the UNODC wide prevention programming and activities. Since the launch, UNODC has entered into a dialogue with policy makers in over 60 countries on how to use the Standards to improve drug prevention at the national level, gaining positive feedback on capacity building efforts and witnessing encouraging real life examples on improving national prevention responses in different parts of the world.

The appreciation of the value of the Standards has been echoed also by numerous other stakeholders, who have reported using the Standards in planning and managing prevention response also at more local level. Most importantly, the Standards have been recognized and endorsed by Member States for example in the Outcome of UNGASS 2016 on the World Drug Problem and in resolutions 59/6, 58/7, 58/3 and 57/3. These documents and resolutions also encourage UNODC to develop further 'practical scientific evidence-based guidelines' (in 58/7 para 2), 'to continue to disseminate scientific evidence on drug abuse prevention' (in 57/3) and recommend to 'promote and improve the systematic collection of information and gathering of evidence' (in UNGASS outcome document). To answer to these mandates, to be able to continue to support and advise internal and external stakeholders alike based on the most recent scientific understanding, and to further build on and expand the work of disseminating the Standards, UNODC is launching a process to update them creating a second edition of the standards.

Scope and expected outcomes

The aim of this process is to review the accumulated recent scientific evidence, and to update them to reflect the most up to date understanding of what constitutes effective prevention interventions, policies and systems. In concrete, the aim is to present the second edition of the Standards to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in March 2018, five years after the first publication of the Standards.

The global review of the evidence the Standards are based upon was undertaken in 2012. Since then, the prevention research has continued to evolve, and it is important to bring this latest understanding to the stakeholders using the Standards. The structure and approach of the Standards have received positive recognition, and thus it is not planned to restructure or substantively change the Standards. Rather the aim is to update the existing sections to better reflect the current state of evidence including the most recent advances made in research, and in particular strengthen those areas where not enough literature was available during the time of publishing the first edition of the Standards, including areas such as prevention of new psychoactive substances, prescription drug use for non-medical purposes, or computer facilitated approaches. In accordance, it is planned to keep the methodology of creating the second edition similar, and conduct a new systematic review of the evidence, paying special attention to evidence emerging from low- and middle-income countries including also grey and unpublished literature, following the methodology used previously and experiences gained from that.

To ultimate aim is to continue to support the quality and coverage of evidence based prevention globally further, and support Member States in developing effective, ethical and evidence based prevention responses further, by providing a second edition of the Standards. It is also hoped, that following the publication, it would be possible to continue the dialogue with Member States on improving the coverage and quality of drug prevention with dissemination, both at country and regional levels and online.

Process, organisation and participants

UNODC is in a process to gather further feedback from especially the national level decision makers across Member States, on what would be most useful and needed for them to make the Standards yet more relevant and helpful vis a vis their mandates and responsibilities. Also, the second edition of the Standards would naturally be based on equally close collaboration with the other international organisations in the field as the first edition, and UNODC is currently in a process to consult them.

UNODC has also requested support from its Member States and asking them to nominate experts, both policy makers and researchers, to guide and inform this work. UNODC will in addition identify other globally leading experts as needed in order to create a representative global expert group. UNODC will gather feedback and seek guidance from this group of experts starting in early 2017.

Based on this preliminary consultation, UNODC will propose a draft methodology for the Standards, to be discussed with the core group of the experts involved. Based on this methodology, a review of the evidence will be undertaken. UNODC will be relying on the group of experts in identifying potential research and literature to be included in the review, including publications evaluating the effectiveness of prevention intervention and policies published in any language, and including grey literature, especially when it comes to identifying research originating from low- and middle-income countries. The consultation

itself will be taking place in English. The identified literature will be rated and reviewed as per the agreed methodology and extracted to inform the revision of the standards. Based on this review UNODC will produce a draft of the second edition of the Standards, and circulate it widely for comments and feedback, in view of finalising it for presenting it to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in 2018.