
Health: European study, 1 in 6 students used illicit drugs. Tranquilisers and painkillers to “get high”

“Positive developments are seen with regard to teenage smoking, against a backdrop of tobacco policy measures introduced over the last two decades”. This is according to a report on adolescents and dependencies carried out in the EU and released today (ESPAD survey). Between 1995 and 2019, “averages for cigarette use declined for lifetime use (68% to 42%); current use (33% to 20%) and daily use (20% to 10%)”. New data reveal high prevalence of e-cigarette smoking (40% for lifetime use and 14% for last-month use). “It is likely that a high proportion of these devices include nicotine and that overall adolescent nicotine use could be rising again”. The study also shows a decline in the use of illicit psychoactive substances, but points to concerns over high-risk cannabis use, non-medical use of prescription drugs and new psychoactive substances. “The latest survey shows that, on average, 1 in 6 school students (17%) reported having used an illicit drug at least once in their life, with levels varying considerably across” participating countries. Cannabis is still the illicit drug most used by school students. On average, 16% of respondents reported using cannabis at least once in their lifetime. The non-medical use of prescription drugs among adolescents “remains a concern. For example, 6.6% of those surveyed reported having used tranquilisers or sedatives, and 4% having used painkillers, ‘to get high’ in their lifetime”.

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