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# LET'S TALK ABOUT DRUGS:

Assessment of drug education in  
Bulgaria, Hungary, Lithuania,  
Poland, and Serbia

REGIONAL REPORT

2020

# LET'S TALK ABOUT DRUGS: ASSESSMENT OF DRUG EDUCATION IN BULGARIA, HUNGARY, LITHUANIA, POLAND, SERBIA

Lisbon Addictions 2022

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## Project partners:

Eurasian harm reduction association (EHRA), Lithuania

Youth Organisations for Drug Action (YODA), Poland

Young Wave, Lithuania

Rights Reporter Foundation, RRF, Hungary

Non-governmental organisation Re Generation, Serbia

VAKU Cultural and Youth Association, Hungary

Center for Humane Policy, Bulgaria

SMART Foundation, Bulgaria

The research was done within LET's Talk about drugs – new MEthods of communication with youth – LET ME project funded by the European Commission (ERASMUS+ program).



## Key definitions

**Effective drug education** – comprehensive, interactive, evidence-based, non-judgmental, age appropriate both formal and informal education that recognise varying concepts of health, family and community that are associated with different target groups, respects privacy and individual freedom, is culturally and socially sensitive, in line with ethical and human rights principles, promotes critical thinking and contributes to the well-being of youth

**Youth/young people** – people aged 16 to 30



# Methodology

The **goal** of the study was to assess existing drug education and its effectiveness, look at what information on drugs is available and how it is perceived by young people, examine the methods and tools used by different actors to talk about drugs with youth, and gather best practices.

To achieve this goal, the following steps were undertaken:

- Desk review
- Qualitative assessment of existing drug education practices and their perceived effectiveness
- Quantitative assessment of youth experiences with drug education and its effectiveness, through the analysis of their knowledge and opinions about drugs and drug use

Respondents for both qualitative and quantitative components of the study were selected through the social networks and contact lists of partner organizations involved in implementing the project and working with youth and/or on harm reduction.



## Ethics and confidentiality

All participants were fully informed about the study, their right to opt out of it and of the existing procedures to ensure the confidentiality. Prior to the interview and survey, each participant signed **Informed consent form**. To maintain confidentiality, the names of participants were not recorded in any form that was entered into the database; rather, identification numbers (codes) were used for identification purposes in all forms.

Hungary and Serbia received Ethics committee approval.



## Qualitative part

- **Focus group and/or semi-structured interviews 1:** group for the youth workers, social workers, educators who are not working in the field of prevention, harm reduction, drug education but have access to young people;
- **Focus group and/or semi-structured interviews 2:** group for the youth workers, social workers, peer-to-peer educators, specialists who are working in the field of prevention, harm reduction, drug education and have access to young people;
- **Focus group and/or semi-structured interviews 3:** group for the young people who would be able to share their opinion and knowledge about drug education in their country;
- **5 semi-structured interviews** with national experts on drug education.



## Quantitative part

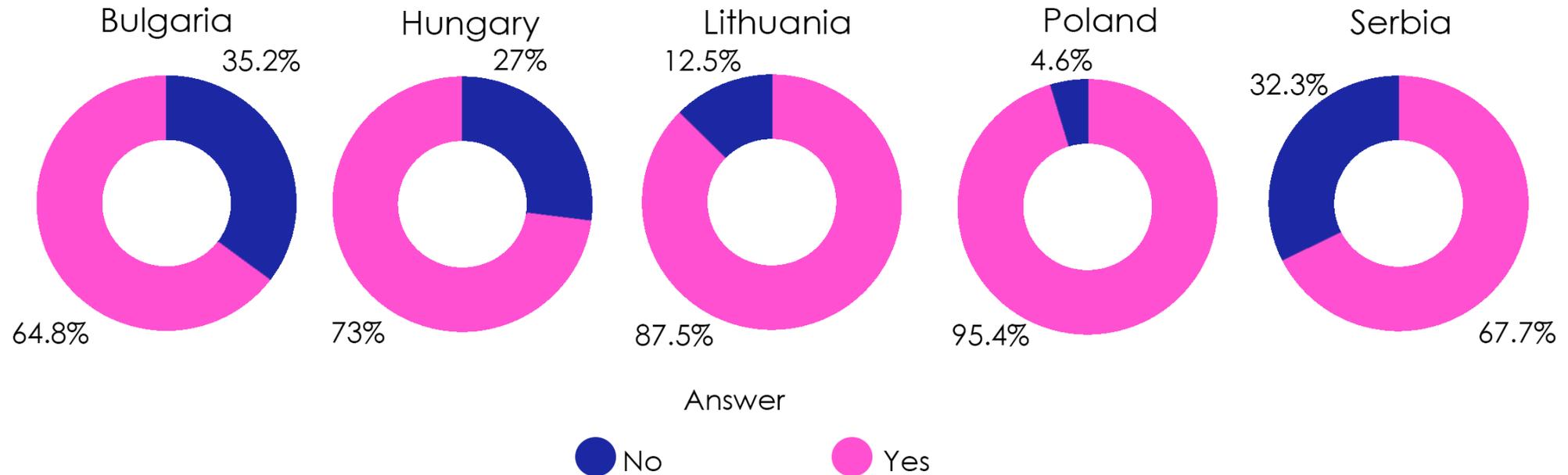
The questionnaire was translated into national languages and uploaded to [SurveyMonkey](#).

The questionnaire included three blocks of questions:

- Demography (6 questions)
- Experience in drug education (12 questions)
- Opinions and knowledge about drugs and drug use (13 questions)

A total of 1406 questionnaires were gathered in 5 countries: **91** in Bulgaria (completion rate 52%), **275** in Hungary (completion rate 54%), **716** in Poland (completion rate 69%), **200** in Lithuania (completion rate 58%), and **124** in Serbia (completion rate 65%).

# Lifetime prevalence of use of illicit substances

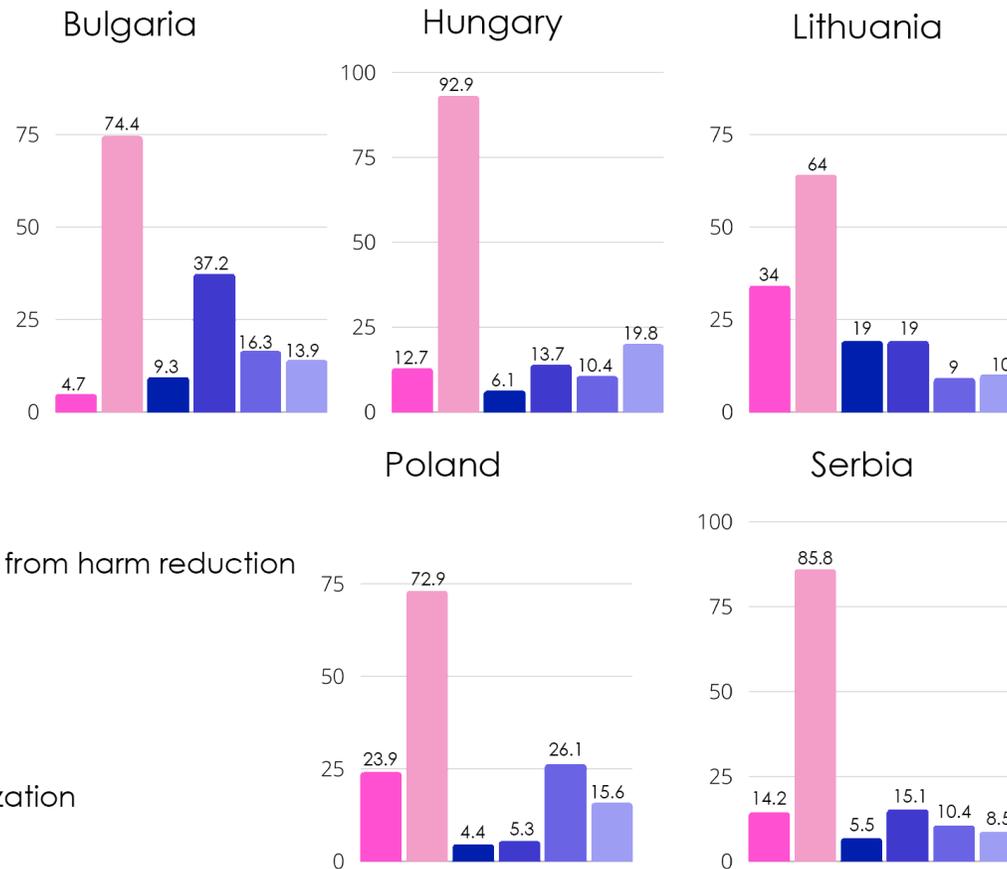


The most common method of drug administration is smoking, followed by oral administration and snorting.

Young people in all countries reported that it would be fairly easy to find illegal substances (responses of “very easy” and “fairly easy” combined): **91%** in Poland, **81%** in Bulgaria, **78%** in Serbia, **73%** in Lithuania, and **72%** in Hungary.



# Settings where study participants received drug education



Bulgaria 53%  
Lithuania 51%  
Poland 40%  
Hungary 23%  
Serbia 15%

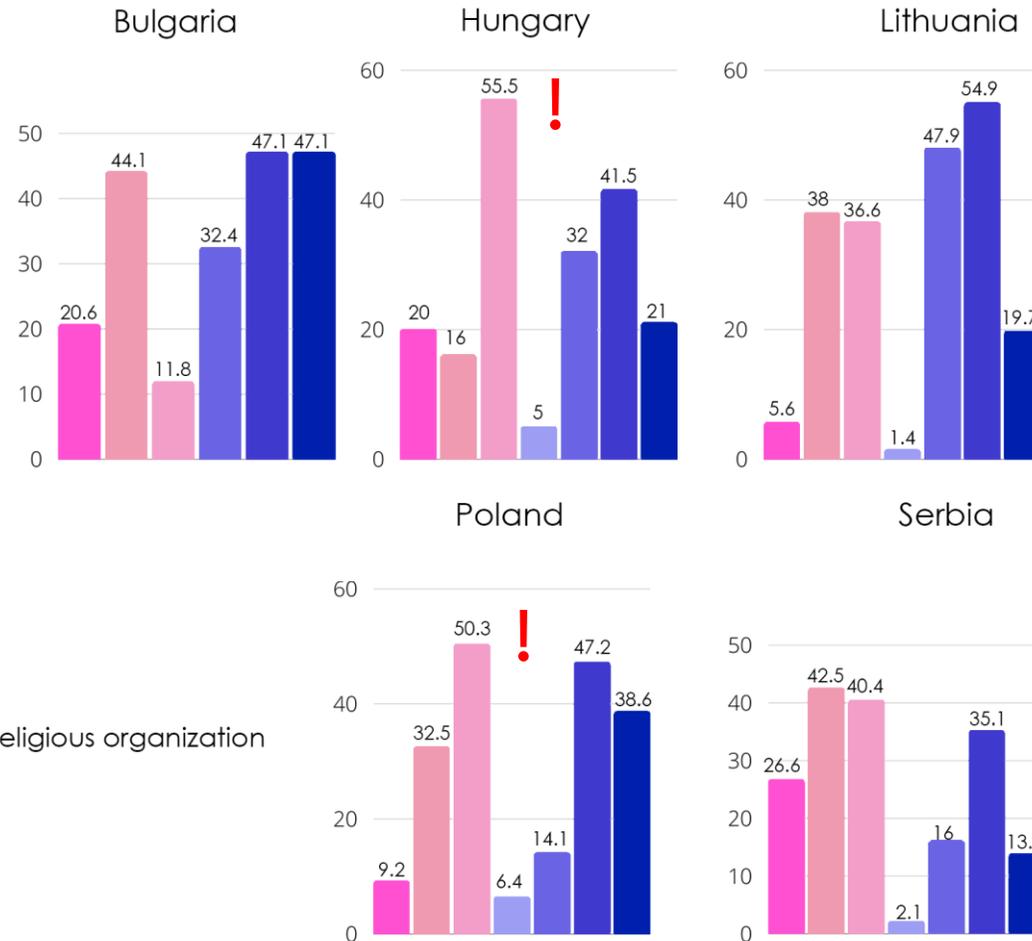
of the respondents reported that they **had never received any form of drug education.**

Answer

- At festival and/or party from harm reduction organization
- At school
- At the university
- At youth organisation
- Harm reduction organization
- Online training (course)



# Who provided it? (in school, university)



Bulgaria 79%

Hungary 84%

Lithuania 79%

Poland 87%

Serbia 83%

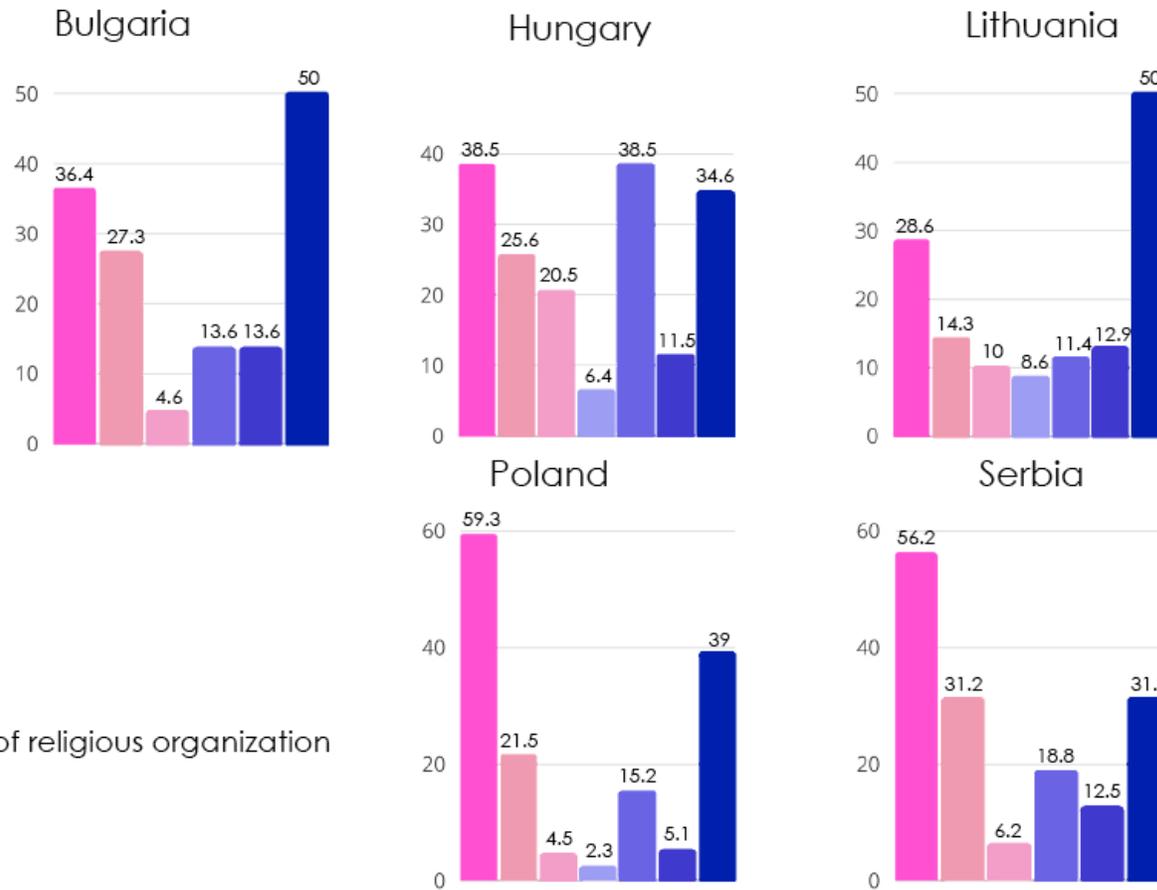
information was provided  
as a **one-off formal  
lecture.**

Answer

- Peer-educator
- Phycologist
- Police officer
- Representative of religious organization
- Social worker
- Teacher
- Youth worker



# Who provided it? (other settings)



Answer

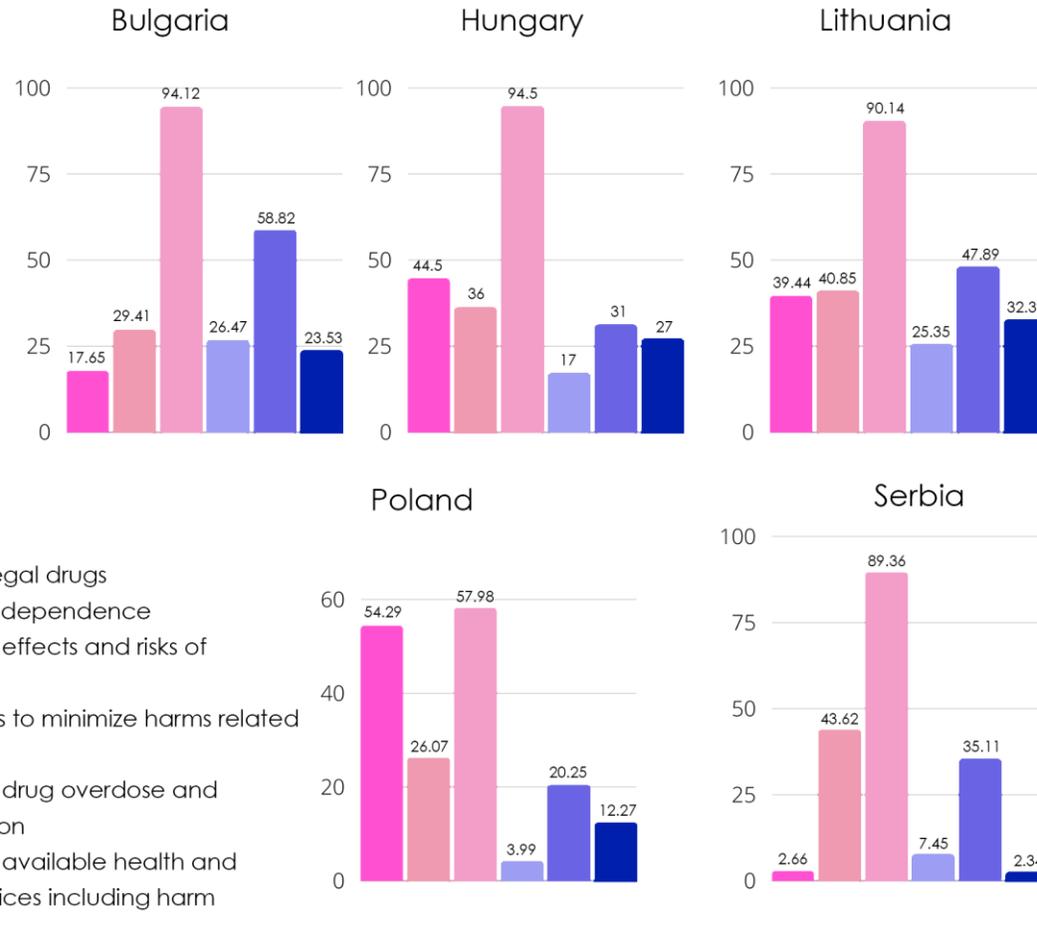
- Peer-educator
- Psychologist
- Police officer
- Representative of religious organization
- Social worker
- Teacher
- Youth worker

The most common places where respondents received drug education outside of schools and universities are:

- festivals/parties where information is provided by harm reduction organisations
- youth organisations
- harm reduction organisations



# What information did you receive during the session? (school, university)

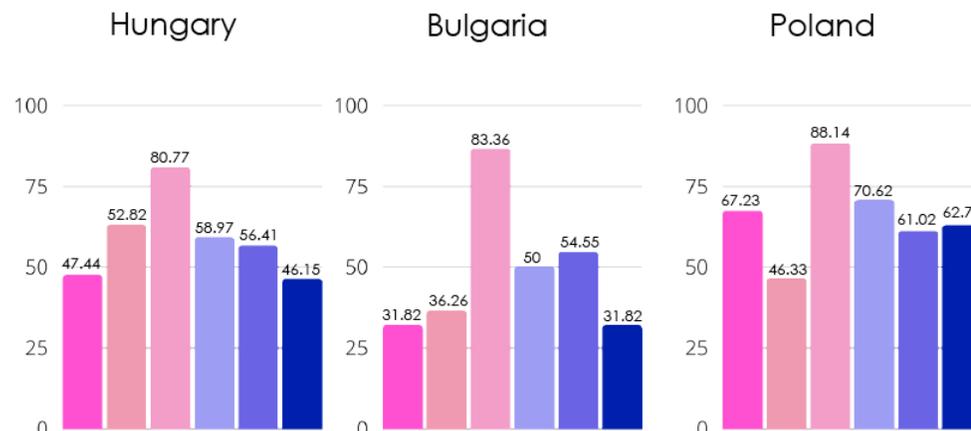


## Answer

- Laws regulating illegal drugs
- Treatment of drug dependence
- Information about effects and risks of substances
- Practices and tools to minimize harms related to drugs use
- Information about drug overdose and overdose prevention
- Information about available health and social support services including harm reduction services

In Poland 61% said that they did not learn a lot from these sessions, 51% disagreed with the statement that the education was provided in a non-judgmental way, and 47% stated that could not honestly share their experience. Similar trends are seen in the other four countries.

# What information did you receive during this session? (other settings)

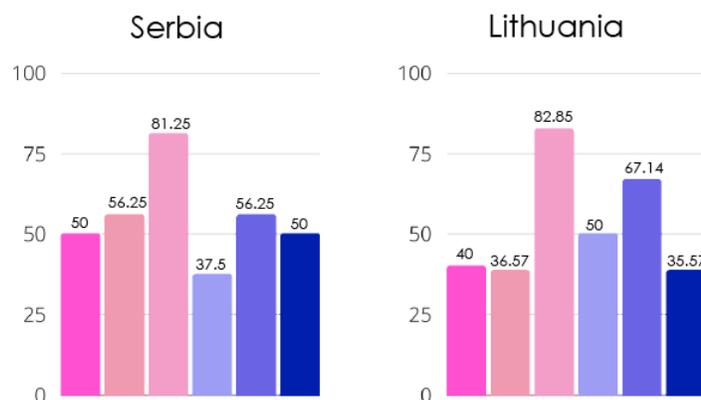


More information about harm reduction practices, health and social services.

Education received outside of schools was evaluated more positively; it was assessed as being less judgmental, participants thought they received more new, honest, and useful information than during the education delivered at schools or universities.

## Answer

- Laws regulating illegal drugs
- Treatment of drug dependence
- Information about effects and risks of substances
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“I think the problem is that everything is criminalized. At least speaking about these problems shouldn't be taboo.”

“It would be great if education would be provided more from the rational side, that information would be impartial, because what we have now and what we had before is one-sided emotional information.”

# DA LI ZNAŠ ODAKLE DOLAZI TVOJA ROBA?

Velika količina narkotika se prenosi u donjem vešu,  
čarapama, brusu, pa čak i u prljavim patikama.

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**EXIT**

EXIT se od svog osnivanja zalaže protiv bilo kakve  
upotrebe i stavljanja droge u promet na bilo koji način.

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# DA LI ZNAŠ ODAKLE DOLAZI TVOJA ROBA?

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**EXIT**





## What and where

The most popular **topics** young people search for are:

- information about substances and risks;
- available harm reduction services;
- laws regulating drug use, and their enforcement;
- available legal help in cases related to drug law offenses;
- information about drug overdose and overdose prevention;
- youth organizations working with people who use drugs; and
- treatment of drug dependence.

When searching for information young people most often turn to the **Internet** (Poland **93%**, Hungary **92%**, Lithuania **88%**, Serbia **84%**, Bulgaria **76%**), their friends, or the media.



# Recommendations

Drug education should be provided:

- by a person who has received special training on substance use and has first-hand experience of substance use;
- in a non-judgmental way, based on scientific evidence;
- in an interactive manner, using engaging, modern tools and platforms;
- preferably in small groups in a safe environment; and
- in a format of open and honest dialog.

Drug education should develop critical thinking and not use simple scare tactics which only lead to a lack of trust in educators among young people and drive them away from services.

**THANK YOU!**

<https://drugeducationyouth.org>