

IS Position Paper – ICELAND

Committee: World Health Organization (WHO)

Country: Iceland

Agenda: Addressing Global Youth Substance Abuse: Focusing on Prevention, Intervention, and Long-Term Solutions

Delegate: Aarav Mishra

The Republic of Iceland recognizes youth substance abuse as a critical global challenge that threatens health, development, and future generations. Iceland believes that effective solutions lie not in punishment, but in prevention, early intervention, and long-term community support. Drawing from its own successful model, Iceland is committed to international collaboration and knowledge-sharing to build a healthier, more resilient future for young people worldwide.

In the late 1990s, Iceland had one of the highest rates of teenage drinking and drug use in Europe. In response, Iceland developed the Icelandic Prevention Model (IPM)—a science-based, community-led approach that dramatically reduced youth substance use over the next two decades.

Key strategies of the IPM include:

Annual national youth surveys to track behaviors and guide policy

Strong cooperation between families, schools, municipalities, and national authorities

Curfews for youth under 16 to limit late-night exposure to risk



Government-funded extracurricular programs (sports, music, arts) to promote healthy engagement

Increased parental involvement and open communication

Today, Iceland ranks among the lowest in youth substance use across Europe.

Iceland strongly believes that youth substance abuse is preventable. It is essential to treat it as a public health issue, emphasizing compassion, education, and early support rather than punishment. Iceland supports:

Promoting mental health awareness in schools and communities

Strengthening preventive education based on real data and local needs

Encouraging global sharing of successful models like the IPM

Supporting youth voices in policymaking

Fostering collaboration between nations to build stronger prevention networks



To support global action, Iceland recommends the following:

1. Adaptation of the Icelandic Prevention Model to fit other national or local settings
2. Investment in youth mental health services as part of school systems
3. Support for extracurricular and skill-building programs to reduce risk factors
4. Regular data collection and public reporting on youth behavior trends
5. Global youth platforms to share experiences, ideas, and leadership in prevention

Iceland's success is proof that change is possible. By investing in prevention, listening to youth, and building strong communities, we can create a safer world free from the harms of substance abuse. Iceland stands ready to support all nations in this effort—and reaffirms its commitment to ensuring that every young person has the opportunity to grow up safe, supported, and substance-free.

