

9th International Dialogue on Population and Sustainable Development

Working group 5: National Standards of Sexuality Education

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Issue note

Background:

The Federal Centre for Health Education and WHO Regional Office for Europe in close cooperation with a European expert group from nine countries have developed 'Standards for Sexuality Education for the European Region'. The Standards were published in 2010 and have been translated into several languages. Reasons for the development of the Standards have been: a varying quality of sexuality education in the European Region, high numbers of STI infections (including HIV) and of unintended pregnancies and sexual violence. The Standards are based on the sexual and reproductive rights.

The rationale for sexuality education is: a) sexuality is part of being human, b) children and adolescents have the right to be informed, c) informal sexuality education is inadequate in modern societies, d) children and adolescents are exposed to media with partly distorted and incorrect information, e) there is a need for sexual health promotion.

Characteristics of the Standards are: a) early start, b) a holistic approach c) focus on information, skills and attitudes d) a positive approach towards sexuality.

Participants of the workshop will be introduced to the matrix of the Standards. The age group 0-4 for the subjects human body, fertility, sexuality and emotions will be shown.

The Standards clearly focus on the government sector and especially on Ministries of Education and Ministries of Health. School-based sexuality education is a very effective tool in reaching the majority of children and adolescents (although attention must be paid to out-of school youth as well, especially in countries with high drop-out rates). Various European examples show the effectiveness and the great benefits of school-based programs.

Concerning the guiding questions:

1. How to strengthen collaboration between different stakeholders (NGO, GO, MoH, MoE etc.):

Suggestions:

- a) Promotion of sexuality education using a multi-sectoral approach
- b) Building bridges between stakeholders
- c) Establishment of Round Tables on sexual and reproductive health of adolescents and sexuality education
- d) Needs analysis

e) Division of labour

2. How to reconcile a rights based approach with a stronger engagement of parents and community?

Suggestions:

- a) Establish partnerships for the introduction of sexuality education or for broadening existing programs.
- b) Inform and include parents prior to the delivery of sexuality education, address and discuss possible fears and misconceptions.
- c) Give detailed explanations what sexuality education will do and which topics will be addressed
- d) Show scientific data that sexuality education doesn't lead to earlier sexual activity – underline the protective nature of sexuality education and that it empowers children / adolescents to act responsibly towards themselves and others

3. How to integrate sexuality education into broader public policy frameworks?

Suggestions:

- a) Sexuality Education is only one building block: policies and laws are required that ensure the sexual and reproductive rights of adolescents. Awareness raising for these rights is essential. Putting the rights of children and adolescents at the centre also helps to open up new perspectives on cultural practices like child marriage.
- b) Sexuality Education must also be linked to services – services must be youth friendly and easily accessible. At this point the cooperation between different stakeholders is of great importance.