

# Minors are not safe in Lithuania

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The problem of using drugs by minors is sharp in Europe. Lithuania is not an exception.

Thus, the number of minors using drugs is on the rise. In 2021, there were 74 cases of teenagers poisoned by drugs, and 115 last year.

According to police data, 150 cases of minors committing criminal offences related to the disposal and smuggling of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances were registered in Lithuania last year. In the first eight months of this year, 75 such cases were registered.

Recently, a 17-year-old died in Lithuania's southern city of Marijampolė after a suspected overdose, while several other minors needed medical treatment for drug poisoning.

Experts debate the causes of this problem. Politicians are divided on what to do, with some saying that education is enough and others advocating for stricter measures.

Extracurricular activities are one way to ensure that children feel safe and stay away from drugs, says Andrius Čerškus, founder of the Basketball School in Vilnius.

In most municipalities, however, the basket for children's extracurricular activities is 15 euros per month, which is too little.

Parents are just unable to pay for extracurricular activities such as sports of their children because of low wages and income.

"Football training costs 80 or 100 euros, hockey 150 euros,

basketball 60 euros," Čerškus says.

"I am surprised at this government which only talks about increasing the non-formal education basket but does nothing about it," says Tomas Tomilinas, vice-chair of the parliament's Commission for the Prevention of Addictions.

"Money is needed and will be needed, so it is important not to spend it on measures that are scientifically proven to be ineffective," adds Morgan Danielè, the commission's chair.

One of the so-called "hard measures" that the parliament is inclined to support is to allow both school staff and police officers to check students' belongings.

But politicians disagree on which measures are effective. They are unsure what to do about rising drug use among minors.

While politicians argue, more and more children become drug addicts.

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