

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 17 (1990)
Heft: 1

Artikel: An expert's opinion : provide more good reasons for not taking drugs
Autor: Ernst, Marie-Louise
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-906838>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. [Siehe Rechtliche Hinweise.](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. [Voir Informations légales.](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. [See Legal notice.](#)

Download PDF: 03.04.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>



est Federal level. In March 1988 it unanimously requested the Federal Council to amend the new law on narcotics to bring it into line with the most up-to-date findings of the experts.

The Government and the "Great Council" of the Canton of Berne followed suit in the autumn of 1988, submitting concrete proposals for liberalisation of our narcotics policy, to the Federal Council. Among these proposals were: limiting to an absolute minimum the activities to be regarded as punishable offences, reduction of the standard penalties to be applied, de-criminalisation of consumers, mitigation of the sentences in the case of offenders who are themselves addicts, and finally a study of the question as to whether hemp should not be regarded as a *lawful* narcotic.

It was then the turn of the Governing Council of the Canton of Geneva, on behalf of the entire "Romandie" (French-speaking region), to recommend to the Federal Council that the existing regulations should be seen as adequate, so that *no* revision of them is needed!

Finally, in September 1989 the Council of the Canton of Zurich expressed its adherence to the Berne proposals, but over and above these asked for the general legalisation of hemp.

Meanwhile the Federal Commission on Narcotics had summed up the latest views expressed, in the form of an official paper entitled "Narcotics Report 1989", with its own comments and suggestions. This report has been circulated to all interested organizations for their final reactions.

A high level debate

It seems likely that for the imminent revision of the Narcotics Law, the demands of the advocates of liberalisation and those of repression will in some pragmatic manner be combined.

It must seem strange to observers outside Switzerland that the public discussion about the situation has hardly been affected by the proclamation by President Bush of the "War against Drugs", or the world-wide trend towards more repressive narcotics policies. This could be due to the considerable degree to which the Swiss public has been informed about the various aspects of the problem, and also to the impressively high level of the public debate that has taken place. In many sectors, near and far, there is

a growing consciousness of the need for great circumspection in the formulation of a policy in any liberal society for taking into account socio-cultural phenomena such as drug consumption. *Thomas Kessler*

Thomas Kessler is a qualified engineer for agriculture and for tropical agro-techniques, and is also an outstanding expert on the complex of Switzerland's drug problems. He has published numerous articles dealing with narcotics policy, and since 1982 has been collaborating closely with the Pharmaceutical Institute of the University of Berne in research into the use of hemp (cannabis). Since 1987 he has been a member of the Cantonal Legislative Council as a representative of the Green Party (i.e., of the Movement for Protection of the Environment). He is furthermore a member of the Permanent Commission for the Administration of Justice.

An expert's opinion:

Provide more good reasons for not taking drugs

The question has been put to me time and time again: how to prevent more and more persons from becoming drug addicts? In my opinion, to find a solution, we must first of all get to know more about the causes of addiction, and I believe that there are four different but inter-related factors which are involved.

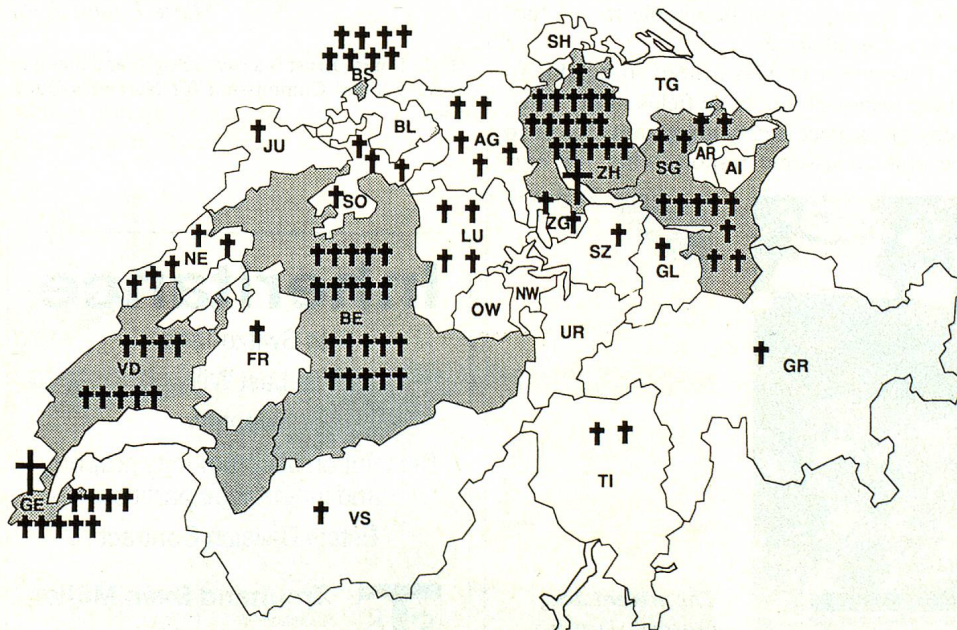
First of all, we must take into account the characteristics of the individual concerned, who with all his or her strong points and weaknesses, is a product of his or her own

personal history. Not every individual can stand up to the same stresses and strains: in some cases, the crisis can come already at a stage which is easily traversed by other persons. And then, in everybody's life there are often "difficult" times, in which the individual is more likely than in others to be susceptible to outside influences, to feel unsteady and vulnerable and thus to be more prone to fall for quick solutions.

Another factor is the environment in which the individual lives. The family, the friends, the situation at school or work-place, living conditions, future prospects, leisure activities and financial situation – all these circumstances can, depending on the individual's age, play an important role. "Is there a 'safety net' of relationships to fall on to if things go badly for me?"

We must moreover take into account the varied range of drugs on offer. Drugs have existed in some form or the other, during the entire history of the human race. They have been used for many different purposes: as medicines and pain-killers, as stimulants, in religious rituals, as means of escape from harsh reality, and for addiction. Thus in themselves drugs cannot be regarded as either good or bad. It depends on what use we make of them. And thereby we are influenced by such factors as their availability, the effect that they have, the manner in which they can be taken, and – for drugs that are legally permitted – the way they are advertised.

The last group of influences contributing to



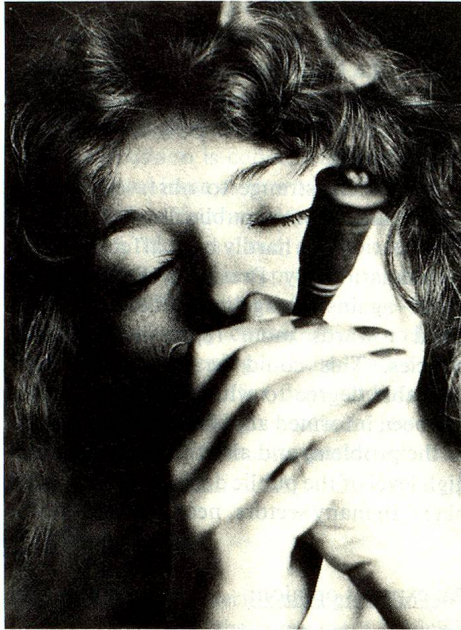
Drugs have even found their way into rural areas – drug deaths in the first half year of 1989 (large cross: 10 deaths, small cross: 1 death)



addiction is that of social relations, standards of behaviour and scales of values. How has society organized the various sectors of our lives, such as work, leisure, housing, education, politics and so on? Which are the rules and regulations that are enforced by law, what values, moral standards and customs apply in our daily lives? When drugs are consumed in order to restore one's inner balance and equanimity, that have been disturbed by boredom, excitement, overstrain and conflicts, one must regard this as a sort of attempt at self-healing. But it is not only permitted drugs (e.g., alcohol) and forbidden drugs (e.g., heroin) that are able to satisfy our need for speedy solutions to our problems. There are plenty of other means of achieving them: one has only to think of the constant exposure to music, of enjoying cream cakes and attending discos, of getting on in one's career and becoming a "workaholic", of watching TV or of the intoxication of speeding along by moped or motor car. So consumption of narcotics is only one of many ways that promise "instant happiness", a possibility that can be bought, in an age when (nearly) everything can be purchased. The narcotics scene that we can see is like a reflection in a mirror, and we should not turn away and look elsewhere if we seriously wish to talk of preventive measures.

I return to the four factors that I mentioned before, factors that are capable of leading to addiction. It is in these areas that our possibilities of effective action lie. In each of these areas I give below as an illustration an example of what I see as our chances of exerting influence:

1. Prevention implies the possibility of being able to say "no!" In that context, the German-American psychoanalyst Erich Fromm said: "To be disobedient, one must have the



Chilum - a kind of pipe for smoking hashish

courage to be alone, to commit errors and to sin. But the ability to be brave is dependent on the stage of development of the individual in question. It is only after a human being has freed himself or herself from the apron strings of the mother and the commands of the father, only after he or she has developed completely as an individual, and thereby acquired the capability of independent thought and feeling - only then can such a human being summon up the courage to say 'no' to authority and to become disobedient." Thus a child, who is unable to say 'no', and whose independence cannot be taken seriously, will be unable to say 'no' when offered drugs.

2. Prevention implies a need to be able to share responsibility in all fields of life. Thereby one aspect is very important: for us to be able to assume responsibility for our-

selves and for our behaviour, we must have the knowledge and the feeling that we are in fact individuals of real value. Without this sense of self-worth ("ego") it will not seem worth-while for us to care about ourselves, our environment or the society in which we live, and for us to assume any responsibility for such matters.

3. Prevention implies prohibitions and restrictions in the publicity for addictive stimulants. Recent promotional advertisements for beer and for a vitamine preparation contained the phrases "Aerger-weg-Bier" ("Beer to drive your worries away") and "Sicherung für Ihre Nerven" ("Safeguard for your nerves") respectively - just two samples from an endless list of examples in which the "addiction mechanism" is triggered off. We should not in this respect turn a blind eye when we talk about drugs!

4. Prevention implies giving practical effect to the provision of equal rights for men and women embodied in our constitution. The relationship between male and female, the distribution of power and influence between the sexes, the relative "weighting" accorded to male and female values is far from establishing equilibrium. And we have witnessed how narcotic consumption often reflects an attempt to establish or re-establish equilibrium in some field or the other.

These are merely some examples by which it is hoped to give you all, employers and employees, mothers and fathers, teachers and civil servants food for thought, as to how each of you can make a contribution to the process of prevention of drug abuse.

Marie-Louise Ernst

Marie-Louise Ernst is a psychologist and member of the Federal Commission for Narcotics Questions.



The present drug centre at Zurich's Platzspitz (photos: Keystone)

Inheritance

in Switzerland:

Last Will

Inventory

Dissolution of community property and inheritance partition

Estate Division Contract



Treuhand Sven Müller

Birkenrain 4
CH-8634 Hombrechtikon ZH
Tel. 055/42 21 21