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Education for leisure activities

Report
Committee on Culture, Science and Education
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Summary

Today we spend more time on leisure than on anything else. The way in which we spend it, however, has consequences for ourselves and for society: idleness can lead to delinquency and crime; active participation in sport or music or other leisure activities can contribute to the improvement of health and to the strengthening of social cohesion.

Education for leisure activities is therefore necessary and the Council of Europe should be involved in the drawing up of appropriate guidelines and principles.

§ 6.6. special attention should be given to programmes and possibilities for leisure activities by particular groups such as the disabled, people who work in difficult conditions or who do monotonous work, housewives, temporary workers and minority groups, the unemployed and the retired;

§ 6.7. care for the quality of life of elderly people should, in addition to other benefits for this age group, be expressed in terms of possibilities for making use of a diversified offer of services that stimulate this age group to pursue activities corresponding to their needs; in pre-retirement, counselling should be encouraged in order to demonstrate the importance of varying activities in old age;

§ 6.8. provision should be made for effective programmes for the training and in-service training of specialists, professionals and voluntary workers to guarantee high quality leisure education.

- through the activity of institutions responsible for animation, which enable common, individual and group participation in different leisure activities;
- through the activity of specially prepared teachers, animators and organisers of leisure and the activity of specialists of different professions using their knowledge to promote a better quality of life during leisure (architects, physicians, teachers, priests and others).

2. Spatial development of towns and districts as a factor of leisure education

In a rationally developed spatial environment every inhabitant, from child to elderly person, should have opportunities to be easily and actively involved in a range of activities during their leisure. This relates to generally accessible playing grounds, recreation venues for teenagers and adults, clubs and lounges and entertainment facilities, libraries and reading rooms, sports areas, facilities and equipment, parks, bicycle routes, pedestrian walks, places of recreation preferred by inhabitants, club meetings, fitness centres, etc.

In 1972, at the request of the Council of Europe's Council for Cultural Cooperation, a study was conducted on the development of space for leisure. The study was part of a broader programme of forward looking studies then pursued by the Council of Europe entitled "Europe - 20 years on". Its conclusions are valid today and continue to be the recommended regulations on the spatial development necessary to take account of the free time needs of the population.

Lack of properly developed space, where a wide range of activities during leisure can be pursued, is particularly felt in towns. States must urgently define univocally normative dimensions of necessary space and the desired components of its development, for use by the inhabitants. They should create possibilities of offering services to the inhabitants or enable individual or group activity in free time. The minimum normative size of open grounds is 5 m²/inhabitant, and together with green areas – 8.5 m²/inhabitant.

3. Leisure education for children and teenagers

Stimulation of interest as a motivating factor, to enrich learning activity, is one of the basic features of the educational process. It is therefore desirable to create occasions for physical, social and psychological cognitive experiences of the child. These will be the basis on which future passions will be imbued, i.e. behaviours connected with a particularly positive emotional attitude towards them. Such passions are characterised by considerable permanence. Even if at a certain period they are suppressed, they can be revived when favourable conditions reappear.

Conditions for learning experiences should be created for young children as early as possible through a varied repertoire of games and learning experiences as a component of the upbringing process, e.g. reading to children, contact with different types of adult activities such as playing music, tourism, sports, etc. Family home, school and local community have a special significance and exert the greatest influence on leisure education of children and teenagers.

The family home is the main place of leisure education. Parents and guardians should be given support in their roles as teachers of young children so that the process of children's upbringing can lead to the proper development of psychophysical and social features. Proper conditions for this process must be created so that it is free from unnecessary stress and takes place in an environment that favours unhindered participation in play – physical, creative and social. These conditions entail knowledge, conscious educational influence exerted by parents and teachers, consciously stimulated contacts with peers, proper space in the home and in its direct vicinity (playground) and the overall climate of the educational process.

Schools start to exert influence on the leisure education process as early as the kindergarten. From the very first formal contacts with the child the school should interact with the parents and guardians and actually become at the same time a "school for parents". Only balanced co-operation in the development and implementation of the educational strategy can help the child to make a proper use of free time and to fill it with substance that helps to develop the child's personality.

It is worth giving consideration to the beginning of "school-parents" cooperation in the area of education before the child starts formal schooling (e.g. a year before formal schooling).

- health service institutions, which perform the therapeutic, correctional and compensatory functions, promoting healthy lifestyle through counselling and health care, prevention and spa rehabilitation, etc.;
- industrial organisations, business and employee associations, which pursue integration programmes and offer recreation to strengthen relations, increase morale and loyalty to the association (integration programmes for employees, company-owned recreation and culture centres, local tourism, etc.);
- special services, army, fire brigade, etc., which promote different ways of spending free time and which implement recreation programmes in compensation;
- theatres, concert halls, museums, etc., which promote culture;
- different commercial centres (entertainment centres, bowling alleys, golf courses, private gyms, cinemas, sports events), which aim to generate profit by meeting leisure needs;
- hotels, guest houses, spas and recreation centres, which cater for tourists and which generate profit by offering accommodation and leisure services;
- prisons and correctional facilities, which have leisure education means and methods in their curricula and which become important factors of re-education.

5. Leisure education for the elderly

The elderly age is usually defined as a post-productive age, normally 60 years and more. However, it is recommended that transition to the lifestyle of retirement take place prior to that period, ideally when people turn fifty. This is when the lifestyle during the retirement age should be planned. Activities targeted at this age group should help identify a new quality of life, satisfy unfulfilled aspirations and develop new interests, which can be accordingly adapted during the period of total free time.

It is recommended to increase sensitivity to the needs of this social group and to look for new forms of organisation and programme influence. The experiences of the Universities of the Third Age, Senior Citizens' Clubs and retired persons' clubs at work establishments are very interesting. However, their programmes do not completely solve the problem.

It is necessary to focus the attention of local communities, public administration and non-government associations on the development of an appropriate, differentiated and versatile offer of activities targeted at the elderly and old people.

6. The role of leisure education and promotion specialists

The educational system should guarantee the effectiveness of leisure education and train specialists able to create conditions for the stimulation of motivation to participate in recreation and create programmes that meet the needs of people during leisure.

Provision of proper conditions for participation in recreation requires preparation of highly qualified specialists, able to perform different roles. We need:

- animators of recreational activities and organisers of different leisure services;
- advisors with the ability to extend their knowledge to others and for the benefit of different services, institutions and outlets which are directly or indirectly involved in the provision of leisure and recreation services;
- administrators and managers of cultural events, entertainment, physical recreation, sport and tourism;
- creators of social and economic policy related to leisure and recreation;
- specialists, instructors and teachers ensuring a high level of recreational programmes and services.

It is necessary to update the educational system so that it prepares better specialists in the development and implementation of leisure policy at different levels of social life. It is necessary to create a system, which will be capable of exerting effective influence with regard to:

- increasing awareness of the value of leisure for the development of an individual and his/her social integration;

Reporting committee: Committee on Culture, Science and Education**Reference to committee:** Doc. 9950, Reference No 2885 of 25 November 2003*Draft recommendation* unanimously adopted by the committee on 22 June 2005

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NB. The names of those present at the meeting are printed in bold

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