



The addictions field is characterised by tensions between groups, by entrenched relationships between some addiction-specific stakeholder groups and powerful political stakeholders, and by the dominance of some forms of evidence over other forms of knowledge. Science and scientists are mainly influential in policy terms only if their scientific findings ‘fit’ with the wider political and economic context

decision-making  
stakeholders  
influence  
addiction policy

This ALICE RAP [WP](#) used a case study approach to examine the role of different stakeholder groups in addictions policy (drugs, alcohol, gambling) in Austria, Denmark, Italy, Poland and the UK - a sample of countries representing different political histories and varying drug policies. The case studies were informed by a range of theories, but mostly drew on Kingdon’s ‘multiple streams’ theory. The following were some of the main conclusions:

- Political, social and economic changes and crises provide ‘windows of opportunity’ in which new/ some stakeholders can increase their policy salience, re-frame understanding of the issue and negotiate a space for their policy ideas.
- It is difficult for new stakeholder groups/ alliances to compete with groups which have entrenched relationships with powerful political stakeholders unless radical political change revises power relationships.
- The inclusion/ exclusion of bodies of evidence in policy decisions is determined by which types of evidence (and which experts) are given legitimacy/ credibility. What is accepted as policy relevant evidence tends to become an integral part of established systems, supported by powerful stakeholders; the evidence itself becomes the basis for attracting resources and extending the evidence base, thus making it less likely that challenges to existing evidence and policies will be successful.
- Representation/ participation of stakeholder groups in the policy arena does not necessarily lead to the democratisation of addiction discourse and policies.
- Representation is a matter of both stakeholders’ abilities and the possibilities available to engage in collective action; this will vary with the political and administrative structures of different societies.
- International organisations (e.g. UNODC, WHO, EMCDDA) are recognised as influential stakeholders. But national governments can (do) use international edicts to support their policies when convenient and also find ways of resisting or re-interpreting international regulations to suit national needs and preferences.

## READ MORE

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