



Although evidence supporting young people's addictions policies is accumulating, the field is underdeveloped compared to adult orientated actions. Currently, for many areas of concern it is difficult to make strong evidence based recommendations to EU policy makers on effective policy actions for young people

Young People
Policy options
evaluation
framework
addiction

This work sought to develop a framework to better understand policy options responding to young people's addictive behaviours in relation to controlled drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and gambling. The framework was developed through a combination of policy mapping, expert surveys, analysis of policy scales, and systematic review of evidence of effectiveness of interventions. Particular attention was paid to how policies for young people were developed (including the role of scientific evidence and consultation with stakeholders and target groups), implemented, assessed for impact, and what outcomes were specified (e.g. simple measures of participation in targeted behaviors vs broader outcomes related to health and wellbeing).

Our findings suggested that legislation (e.g. drugs laws) and general population addiction or substance use policies represented the key documents for young people, but we found few examples of policy specifically developed for, and with the participation of, young people, and there was inconsistency in approach across targeted behaviours. This meant a perceived lack of priority towards *specific* needs of young people, and, in general, it is felt that young people need to be protected from *any* participation in potentially addictive behaviors rather than being seen as active agents, as is predominately the case with adults. Whilst this is understandable, as early participation in harmful behavior can have long lasting adverse effects, such approaches may not best prepare young people for adult environments in which they will be regularly exposed to such risks and opportunities.

Our framework suggested three broad areas considered important for the evaluation of young people's policy: *quality of development & content*; *implementation*; and *outcomes*; and we suggested indicator descriptors for each. However, we found few examples of 'real world' policy evaluation in order to test these, compared with research on the actions that might contribute to policy aims (e.g. interventions research). Furthermore, our review of evidence of effectiveness suggested that a major future challenge for 'evidence-based' addictions policy making for young people is that the currently available evidence base for young people is incomplete. At best, recommendations can only be made about 'promising' approaches, which may not serve the needs of policy makers. A weak evidence based for young people's actions also means that it may be difficult to respond to challenges from some industry actors who oppose more restrictive approaches to currently legal behaviours.

READ MORE

Brotherhood A et al. (2014): *Adolescents as customers of addiction*. Addictions and Lifestyles in Contemporary Europe: Reframing Addictions Project (ALICE RAP): [Deliverable 16.1](#)

See the Policy Database: <http://alice-rap.prevention-standards.eu/> for further information and research results.

The research leading to these findings has received funding from the European Union's FP7 under Grant Agreement n° 266813
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