



EUROPEANS DESERVE MORE SCIENCE IN EU POLICY ON BEHAVIORAL ADDICTIONS

The Platform for Better Preventive Healthcare came together on 30 November 2021 to discuss the need for more science in EU policy on behavioral addictions such as gambling and video gaming. The event was hosted by MEP Adriana Maldonado López (S&D, Spain) and MEP Mikuláš Peksa (Greens, Czechia). It featured a distinguished panel of addiction policy experts, including Mr Jindrich Voboril (IRAP) and Mr Viktor Mravčík (National Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Addiction in Czechia).

"Addictions should be looked in as one issue with different faces."

Jindrich Voboril

The panel agreed that the basis of good quality legislation on behavioral addictions rests in reframing the understanding and the perception of decision-makers of addictions. There is a need to include more varied forms of addictions such as gambling in the traditional definition used by decision-makers. Scientists, experts, non-governmental organisations and the industry should be invited to the debate. The panel extends the following policy recommendations that will lead to improved EU policy on behavioral addictions:

ENSURE A CENTRAL ROLE OF HARM REDUCTION IN BEHAVIORAL ADDICTION POLICY-MAKING

- Make sure that harm reduction is both a goal and an integral part of the policy structure. It should be a pillar in itself in addiction policies.
- Propose a regulatory strategy which enables access to harm reduction tools in order to ensure that everyone, regardless of their socio-economic situation, can improve their health.
- Recognise the work of NGOs in providing harm reduction solutions such as substitutions to substances or products.
- Based on the lessons learned from the policies related to illegal drugs, alcohol and tobacco, promote the use of harm reduction measures in the field of behavioral addictions.
- Place the focus of decision-makers on risk prevention in order to reduce the negative impact on society and individuals.
- Make sure to regulate digital platform to make them a safer place for vulnerable people such as youngsters. Guarantee them with protective measures.
- Encourage the active role of industries in setting up a regulation that would involve some preventive measures and would be assessed by a panel of independent professionals.

"Harm reduction should be a goal as such and an integral part of the policy structure"

Viktor Mravčík

ENSURE AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TOWARDS BEHAVIORAL ADDICTIONS

- Promote up-to-date scientific research in the EU health policy making.



- Debunk scientific myths surrounding addictions and prevention of diseases in general. Make sure to know what works and what has counterproductive effects in managing addictions.
- Make sure to look at addiction as one issue with different faces rather than a fragmented phenomenon.
- Develop an integrated approach which understands the interconnectedness of addictions and the tendencies of addicted people to switch from one form of addiction to another.
- Use the good work of the Lisbon-based EU agency EMCDDA and consider expansion of its mandate on other types of addictions.

ENSURE THAT EU POLICY ON BEHAVIORAL ADDICTIONS IS BASED ON SCIENCE

- Develop political objectives at the European level as regards policy towards behavioral addictions which are based on scientifically proven, balanced and realistic concepts.
- Combine the strength of the regulation with the real life situation to ensure reliable and sustainable legislation on addiction. Use science as a bridging solution.
- Based on the available wide body of scientific evidence, recognize the policy of harm reduction as an effective tool in gambling cessation.
- Ensure to reflect the latest scientific findings in the field of mental health and addictive behaviour treatments.
- Promote best practices of those working with addicted individuals on the ground. Take into account the views of experts, scientists and the non-governmental sector.
- Make sure to maintain the link between research, monitoring and policy practice when designing addiction policies. Rely on science to understand the evolution of each addiction sector and identify risk factors.
- Combine scientific knowledge with political weight to promote the scientific validity of the EU legislation in front of the European public and increase transparency in available options to reduce the negative consequences of behavioral addictions on human health.

"Policies must be based on scientifically proven concepts."

MEP Mikuláš Peksa

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