



In recent decades, European countries have witnessed a process of withdrawing addictions from their political context in the media and public discourse. Social determinants of addictions were replaced by specific individual causes. Decreased authority of political and institutional actors made a room for individual experiences and experts representing mostly biomedical sciences

addiction
 public portrayal
media
 individualization
 knowledge sources

The collected material from Italian, Finnish and Polish printed media demonstrates increasing amounts of sources of knowledge on the addiction problem in the course of the 1990s, with a clearly lower coverage in 2011. In all three countries, media increasingly presented the individual addict's perspective, therefore strengthening the image of addiction as a risk to anybody, no matter structural content.

Addiction problems have become less articulated in the political agenda. Decreasing representation of civic and political sources reflects a general weakening of a social framing of addiction problems, as well as an overall depoliticizing trend of the addiction questions. The process of individualization of addiction at the expense of public spheres occurred most clearly in Finland, but individualization trends have been also found in Italy and Poland, accompanied by the medicalization of the problem.

The dominant sources in addiction discourse varied between countries. In Finland actors representing the private sphere -individuals and addicts- dominated. This was different in Italy and Poland, where research and medical sources, on the one hand, with media (Italy) and public/state sources (Poland), on the other, were found to be among the most frequently used.

Alcohol and illegal drugs were most often the subject of the media focus. Finnish and Polish newspapers mainly referred to alcoholism, whereas the Italian newspapers dealt mostly with drug-related addiction. The small number of articles on tobacco and the decreasing number of articles on alcohol in Finland and Italy was somehow substituted by the increase of articles on behavioural addictions such as gambling or eating disorders, mostly referred to by medical and research sources.

Changing sources of authority in addiction-related issues reflect social and political outcomes of economic transformations, mixed with the cultural context of traditional alcohol and drug addictions. For instance, in Finland, the domination of individual sources in alcohol and drug discourse illustrated a more general trend of replacing collective control and responsibility of the state by the notion of individual responsibility, whereas in Poland and Italy the preoccupation of the political sphere with morally sensitive drug issues reflected attempts of new political and economic elites to legitimize their new powers.

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