

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to explain the policy process of regional social service development strategies in the area of services for drug users. The process is explained on examination of two cases of very diverse regional strategies representing good and bad practice. Social construction of target populations is used as a theoretical framework and the research aims to verify and develop its theoretical assumptions. Subjective perceptions of key actors are deconstructed through public document analysis and in-depth interviews. Service providers are perceived as a trustworthy and competent policy actor and as such they play an important role in the development of medium-term strategy. The prevailing positive construction of drug users by providers and the strong position of service providers contribute to broad distribution of services for drug users in both examined regions. The main difference between the cases is explained by different perception of drug users by the public, different continuity of planning processes, and variance in the dynamic relationship between public opinion and key public policy makers.