

Abstract of PhD. dissertation

The specificity of spatial differentiation of drug addiction in post-communist EU Member States

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The primary goal of this dissertation is to build a descriptive model of spatial differentiation of drug addiction in 2016 in post-communist EU Member States. This dissertation features an analysis of the drug problem (drug use prevalence and drug markets) and new psychoactive substances including health-related issues in the following countries: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Three cognitive objectives were set in the form of the following questions: (1) What patterns are there in the spatial differentiation of the drug problem? (2) What patterns are there in the spatial differentiation of health problems in relation to drugs? (3) What patterns are there in the spatial differentiation of the new psychoactive substances ("designer drugs")? Two methodological objectives were set in the form of the following questions: (1) What is the availability and quality of data indicative of the drug situation in the area analysed? (2) To what extent are the data reported by the respective countries comparable?

To measure the scale of the problem of drugs and drug addiction, this PhD dissertation drew upon the EMCDDA indicators used for describing the phenomenon in question i.e. issues related to the three cognitive objectives formulated herein. For the purposes of the analyses, various indicators were developed to estimate the problem of drugs in the post-communist Member States of the European Union. Key preliminary works involved identifying potential data sources and selecting the indicators. Although the dissertation is based on the desk research, it also includes interviews (n=11) and surveys (n=27). The results thereof were not only used to conduct analyses but also to assess the comparability and quality of some statistical data gathered.

At the outset, three hypotheses were formulated: (1) general differentiation of the threat/prevalence of drugs and drug addiction in the area analysed is insignificant, (2) socio-economic status of the countries does not constitute a group of factors for the scale and type of the problem of drugs and drug addiction, (3) the problem of new psychoactive substances refers mainly to the countries applying the repressive drug policy.

In Chapter 3 the spatial differentiation of drug use has been described while Chapter 4 presents the spatial differentiation of the scale of drug-related problems. Chapter 5 discusses the spatial differentiation of drug markets and drug-related crime. Chapter 6 covers the differentiation of the problem of new psychoactive substances (“designer drugs”). Chapter 7 discusses the drug law, including the provisions related to the new psychoactive substances.

The dissertation analyses verify the hypotheses proposed in the empirical chapters based on the quantitative data on drug markets, prevalence of drugs and new psychoactive substances as well as the consumption-related problems.

To summaries the verification of the first hypothesis as discussed in Chapters 3–6, it must be concluded that it was confirmed in half of cases while the second hypothesis was confirmed in more than half of cases based on data also from Chapters 3–6. The verification of the third hypothesis required not only the description of the scale of the prevalence of new psychoactive substances and the related problems (Chapter 6) but also the characterization to the drug law (Chapter 7). The analysis of the data collected proved that the third hypothesis failed to be confirmed in more than half of cases.

The dissertation is conceptually based on the balloon effect theory by Frank. O. Mora. This theoretical model is concerned with the departure from traditional drug use patterns towards new psychoactive substances. An example of the balloon effect is the cross-border problem of methamphetamine. Methamphetamine manufactured in Czechia, which is the main country of origin of this drug, is also trafficked into Germany. Methamphetamine is manufactured primarily from pseudoephedrine, which is extracted from cough pharmaceuticals available over the counter at pharmacies. Following the introduction of mechanisms controlling the sale of drugs containing pseudoephedrine in Czechia, Polish pharmacies started to be used as sources of pseudoephedrine for clandestine laboratories. Consequently, sales of such pharmaceuticals increased and methamphetamine also began to be manufactured in Poland. To illustrate the phenomenon, the pressure applied on the balloon in place causes the air to change the shape of the balloon outwards in another. The Czech authorities introduced the control measures on the sale of pharmaceutical containing pseudoephedrine, which made organized crime syndicated find alternative sources of the methamphetamine precursors. The other theory drawn upon in

this dissertation is the world-systems approach developed by Immanuel Wallerstein. The concept holds that the unit of analysis should not be countries or societies but historical system or “mini-systems”. According to Wallerstein, the world is divided into core countries, semi-periphery countries and periphery countries. The spatial differentiation of the problem of drugs and drug addiction concerns semi-periphery countries, where unequal social and economic processes led to the underdevelopment of economy and society. As a result, some social processes e.g. the escalation of drugs and drug addiction in such areas demonstrate higher indicators compared to areas where the problem of drugs and drug addiction is limited, which was partly confirmed by the verification of the first hypothesis.

