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Harm reduction services in The Netherlands (2021)

Recent developments and future challenges

Lisbon Addictions 2022

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Harm reduction services in the Netherlands: recent developments and future challenges

Inventory through employee interviews

- Focus on four harm reduction facilities
 1. Drug consumption rooms ($n=17$)
 2. Opioid substitution treatment ($n=53$)
 3. Heroin-assisted treatment ($n=17$)
 4. Needle and syringe exchange ($n=29$)
- Three main topics addressed
 1. Current state of affairs in HR services
 2. Recent developments for HR services
 3. Current and future challenges



Developments: drug consumption rooms

- Overall decrease in number of visitors
- Ageing (but sometimes younger) population
- (Labour) migrants from Central and Eastern Europe
- Refugees from the Middle East and North Africa
- Use of pain medication and GHB (usually not allowed)

Developments: opioid substitution treatment

- Ageing population of service users
- Some increase in younger clients
- (Labour) migrants and refugees → communication issues
- Increased entering of OST related to use of pain medication
- Increase in buprenorphine medication compared to methadone

Developments: heroin-assisted treatment

- Decreased number of clients (mortality, shifts to other medication)
- Ageing population → increase in somatic health problems
- One HAT reported an increase in younger (Dutch) clients

Developments: needle and syringe exchange

- Decreased number of clients due to reduction in IDU in NL
- Diversifying population (labour migrants Central & Eastern Europe)

Current and future challenges for HR services

- Overall decline in number of clients / service users → decreased funding and uncertain future of services?
→ convincing policy- and decision makers of necessity
- (Some) increase in new groups of service users, mainly (labour) migrants from Central and Eastern Europe
→ access and language barriers, low referral to treatment

Current and future challenges for HR services

- Overall ageing populations of service users → somatic health problems and stigma among health professionals
- Increase in use of GHB > currently declined at most DCRs
- Some increase in use of (prescribed) pain medications
- Restrictive policies for access to HR services → age limits, substances, migrants' rights, living conditions

Thank you for your attention!

Report '*Harm reduction services in The Netherlands: Recent developments and future challenges*':

<https://www.trimbos.nl/aanbod/webwinkel/af1973-harm-reduction-services-in-the-netherlands/>

English webpage on harm reduction in The Netherlands:

<https://www.trimbos.nl/kennis/harm-reduction-bij-drugsgebruik/harm-reduction-in-the-netherlands/>



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