

France to open first safe-injection room for drug addicts

October 11 2016



Injection materials are pictured in first safe- injection room for drug addicts in Paris, Tuesday, Oct. 11, 2016. France opens its first safe-injection room for drug addicts despite years of efforts by conservatives to block the plan. Intravenous drug users will be given access to clean needles under medical supervision and in the presence of drug counselors in an effort to prevent viral infections and overdoses. (Patrick Kovarik, Pool via AP)

France will open its first safe-injection room for drug addicts despite

years of efforts by conservatives to block the plan.

The room, located in northern Paris, is opening for a six-year test period as allowed by a health law passed last year by the Socialist government.

Intravenous drug users will be given free access to clean needles under medical supervision and in the presence of drug counselors in an effort to prevent viral infections and overdoses.

About 100 addicts are expected to come each day to the room, which was unveiled to officials Tuesday. It will open to addicts on Friday.

Health Minister Marisol Touraine said in a statement that the room is an "innovative and courageous response to a health emergency situation."

The room is located in a building near a hospital close to Paris' Gare du Nord station—a major hub where trains from London and Brussels arrive. The area is also the main site for the consumption and sale of illegal drugs in the French capital, according to authorities.

"This safe-injection room doesn't substitute for policies in place ... It's targeting outsiders, marginalized people", Touraine said.

France's health care system will entirely finance the room and the equipment.



Cubicles are pictured in first safe- injection room for drug addicts in Paris, Tuesday, Oct. 11, 2016. France opens its first safe-injection room for drug addicts despite years of efforts by conservatives to block the plan. Intravenous drug users will be given access to clean needles under medical supervision and in the presence of drug counselors in an effort to prevent viral infections and overdoses. (Patrick Kovarik, Pool via AP)

Paris' Socialist mayor, Anne Hidalgo, said she feels "very moved and very proud because what's being done here is necessary, necessary for the people who are in complete disarray, because they know they have a door they can enter.

"They can come here, they can get counselling, they can get assistance and get guided toward a life that will get them out of these addictions."

The conservative opposition says the measure trivializes drug use and warns against potential security problems.

"The only acceptable policy remains helping people into ending drug usage," conservative politicians at Paris city council said in a written statement.

French authorities are following Switzerland's example, where a safe-injection room opened in 1986. Similar rooms now exist in Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Australia and Canada.



The first safe- injection room for drug addicts is pictured in Paris, Tuesday, Oct. 11, 2016. France opens its first safe-injection room for drug addicts despite years of efforts by conservatives to block the plan. Intravenous drug users will be given access to clean needles under medical supervision and in the presence of drug counselors in an effort to prevent viral infections and overdoses. (Patrick Kovarik, Pool via AP)



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A banner reading "No to a injection site in residential area" is pictured near first safe- injection room for drug addicts in Paris, Tuesday, Oct. 11, 2016. France opens its first safe-injection room for drug addicts despite years of efforts by conservatives to block the plan. Intravenous drug users will be given access to clean needles under medical supervision and in the presence of drug counselors in an effort to prevent viral infections and overdoses. (Patrick Kovarik, Pool via AP)

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Citation: France to open first safe-injection room for drug addicts (2016, October 11) retrieved 20 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-10-france-safe-injection-room-drug-addicts.html>

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