

Following legislation to regulate **drug consumption rooms** the German Ministry of Health commissioned a study of all 19 of the country's facilities. These offer a legally sanctioned building in which to inject (or take by other means) drugs, with emergency intervention and medical care on-site. Published in full in German, a summary has been released in English.¹ A 10-year trend analysis in four cities concluded that the facilities had significantly contributed to reductions in drug-related deaths. Across Germany, from 1995 to 2001 there were 2.1 million visits to the rooms of which 5426 culminated in a drug-related emergency which could have ended in death. In the event, there were none. Normally about one in 20–30 overdoses is fatal. A recent review said the study provides the "most compelling evidence" yet that drug consumption rooms reduce overdose deaths.²

Another study assessed the first 18 months of Australia's first drug consumption room, the focus of intense controversy. It reported that there were 56,861 visits by 3810 registered users who experienced 409 overdoses, of which in a year at least four and perhaps nine would otherwise have been fatal.³ Due probably to its small capacity (under 5% of all injections in the area took place on its premises) and the fact that visitors used it on average just once a week, the facility made no discernable impact on the local overdose rate. As in Germany, the report notes benefits such as improved injecting technique, provision of health advice and care, and referral to other services.

1 Poschadel S. et al. *Evaluation der Arbeit der Drogenkonsumräume in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*. English abstract. November 2002.

2 Kimber J. et al. "Drug consumption facilities: an update since 2000." *Drug and Alcohol Review*: 2003, 22(2), p. 227–233.

3 MSIC Evaluation Committee. *Final report of the evaluation of the Sydney medically supervised injection centre*. 2003.