

## SHOULD HEROIN TREATMENT BE PROVIDED IN NORWAY?

A look at the political debate

### ABSTRACT

*In 2008 the Norwegian Minister of Health and Social Care raised the initiative that heroin-assisted treatment be made available in Norway. The initiative prompted heated public debate. In 2009, the Government appointed a committee (Stoltenbergutvalget) that was tasked to examine how the treatment of substance abusers most in need of help could be improved. At the same time, the committee was to consider whether heroin-assisted treatment should be offered to 'this particular group'. One of the committee's proposals was to launch a trial programme of heroin-assisted treatment. However, while the committee was unanimous in its other 21 proposals, the members were split in their support for heroin-assisted treatment. The report was submitted for comment to a wide range of authorities and organizations. Most of the more than 100 consultative statements expressed objections to heroin-assisted treatment. The next stage saw the Research Council of Norway arrange a consensus conference to get the best background information for a formal decision. The conference report was published in September 2011, concluding that Norway lacked a solid enough foundation for the establishment of heroin-assisted treatment. In 2012 a white paper on alcohol and drug policy will be presented to Parliament. It is expected that the Government will announce its stand on heroin-assisted treatment in this paper.*

*This chapter discusses the developments in this process so far. What are the arguments offered for and against, on what basis and in which contexts do these arguments appear? How does heroin treatment fit in with Norwegian drug policy in general?*

**KEYWORDS:** Heroin-assisted treatment, injecting drug users, drug policy, Norway