

The state of euthanasia in Europe

December 12 2014

French legislation introduced Friday to ease restrictions on doctor-assisted death risks further diversifying the range of clashing national laws on euthanasia across Europe.

Following is a round-up of the state of current euthanasia regulations in Europe.

LEGALISED

In THE NETHERLANDS, active, direct euthanasia has been legal since April 2002. Requested administration of a drug in lethal doses is authorised if patients make the request while fully mentally lucid. They must also endure unbearable and endless suffering from a condition diagnosed as incurable by at least two doctors.

The Netherlands has also authorised euthanasia for children younger than 12 under strict conditions.

BELGIUM lifted restrictions on euthanasia in September 2002 for patients facing constant, unbearable and untreatable physical or psychic suffering; aged 18 or over; and who request termination of life in a voluntary, deliberated and repeated manner free from coercion.

Provisions for doctor-assisted death in cases that meet those criteria may also be stipulated in "living wills" written by healthy people before they fall ill, and which remain valid for five years.

In February 2014, Belgium became the first country to authorise children to request euthanasia if they suffer a terminal disease, and understand the consequences of the act.

In LUXEMBOURG, a text legalising euthanasia in certain terminal cases was approved in March 2009. It excludes minors.

AUTHORISED OR TOLERATED

SWITZERLAND is one of the rare countries that allows assisted suicide by patients administering a lethal dose of medication themselves. Switzerland does not allow active, direct euthanasia by a third party, but tolerates the provision of substances to relieve suffering even if death is a possible side-effect.

Passive euthanasia, or the halting of medical procedures that maintain life, is also tolerated.

In FRANCE, a 2005 law acknowledges a "right to die" in connection with procedures to ease suffering.

A doctor can prescribe pain killers even if their use under certain conditions may result in death, provided the patient is in an advanced stage of an [incurable disease](#).

SWEDEN authorised passive euthanasia in 2010.

BRITAIN has allowed medical personnel to halt life-preserving treatment in certain cases since 2002. Prosecution of those who have helped a close relative die after clearly expressing the desire to end their lives has receded since 2010.

In AUSTRIA and GERMANY, passive euthanasia is permitted if the

patient has requested it.

Since 1992, DENMARK has allowed patients to file previously written refusal of excessive treatment in dire situations, with the document held in a centralised register.

In NORWAY, passive euthanasia is permitted if requested by the patient, or by a relative if the patient is unconscious.

In HUNGARY, SPAIN and the CZECH REPUBLIC, people with incurable diseases can refuse treatment.

In PORTUGAL, active and passive euthanasia is not legal, but an ethical council has approved the halting of treatment in certain cases.

PROHIBITED

In ITALY, ROMANIA, GREECE, BOSNIA, SERBIA, CROATIA, POLAND AND IRELAND [euthanasia](#) is forbidden, and considered homicide. Punishment can range from 14 and 15 years in prison in Ireland and Italy respectively, to relatively light sentences in Croatia.

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