

European countries that allow assisted dying

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France could become the next European country to legalize assisted dying for the terminally ill under a proposal set out by President

Emmanuel Macron.

In an interview with two French newspapers he suggested that adults with full control of their judgment, suffering an incurable and life-threatening illness in the short-to-medium term and whose pain cannot be relieved should be able to "ask to be helped to die".

Several other European countries already allow the terminally ill to receive help to end their lives.

Here is a round-up of the situation:

Euthanasia: Dutch first

In April 2002, the Netherlands became the first country in the world to legalize active [euthanasia](#), whereby doctors administer lethal doses of drugs to patients suffering from an incurable condition.

It also legalized assisted suicide, where patients can receive help to voluntarily take their own life.

The Dutch law said the patient must have "unbearable suffering with no prospect of improvement" and must have requested to die in a way that is "voluntary, well considered and with full conviction".

In 2012, the Netherlands expanded the law to authorize euthanasia for over-12s in great suffering, provided they have [parental consent](#), and in 2020 to patients with severe dementia, if the patient had requested the procedure while still mentally competent.

The Dutch government in April 2023 also approved euthanasia for

children under 12 after years of debate, permitting mercy deaths for young minors suffering "unbearably and without hope".

Belgium, Luxembourg, Spain, Portugal

Belgium was the second country to adopt euthanasia and assisted suicide in May 2002, and with similar caveats to the Dutch.

In 2014 it went further than the Netherlands by allowing terminally ill children of all ages to also request the procedure, with the consent of their parents.

Fellow Benelux country Luxembourg decriminalized euthanasia and assisted dying in 2009, followed by Spain in June 2021, which legalized both practices.

Portugal in May 2023 adopted a bill decriminalizing euthanasia, despite strong opposition from President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, a devout churchgoer.

The law legalized euthanasia for people in great suffering and with incurable diseases.

Assisted dying: final destination Switzerland

Switzerland, which prohibits euthanasia, has for decades allowed assisted suicide, making it the go-to destination for patients from around Europe looking for assistance to end their suffering.

The growth of so-called "suicide tourism" has caused much soul-searching in Switzerland but the authorities decided in 2011 against restricting the practice.

Neighboring Austria, a staunchly Catholic nation, also legalized assisted suicide in 2022 after its constitutional court ruled the country was violating citizens' fundamental rights in making it illegal.

Italy's constitutional court by contrast in February 2022 rejected a bid to hold a referendum on decriminalizing assisted dying, judging that such a vote would fail to protect the weakest.

But the court ruled that it should not always be punishable to help someone with "intolerable" physical or psychological suffering to commit suicide.

The issue is also the subject of renewed public interest in Britain. In 2015, MPs voted overwhelmingly against allowing assisted dying but over 150,000 people have signed a petition calling for a new debate and vote.

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