

France's Macron announces bill for assisted dying

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French President Emmanuel Macron will present a bill on assisted dying to go before parliament in May, he said in an interview published by French media on Sunday.

The move could make France the next European country to legalize euthanasia for the terminally ill, following a long consultation with a committee of French citizens on "active assistance to dying".

Only 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 will be able to "ask to be helped to die", Macron told the La Croix and Liberation newspapers.

The change is necessary "because there are situations you cannot humanely accept", Macron said. The goal was "to reconcile an individual's autonomy with the nation's solidarity.

"With this bill, we are facing up to death," he said.

But the highly controversial move is likely to provoke stiff opposition, and even though the bill would be presented before the European Parliament elections in June, its passage is unlikely before 2025.

While [opinion polls](#) suggest a majority of French favor right-to-die legislation, [religious leaders](#) in the traditionally Catholic country as well as many health workers oppose it.

Macron acknowledged the debate by announcing the bill simultaneously to La Croix, a Catholic daily, and the left-leaning Liberation, which has championed the euthanasia cause.

The move comes days after Macron spearheaded an effort that saw the right to abortion enshrined in France's Constitution earlier this month, the first country in the world to do so.

'Precise criteria'

The president said minors and patients suffering psychiatric or neurodegenerative conditions such as Alzheimer's would not be eligible.

If medical professionals gave their consent, a lethal substance would be prescribed for the patient, who could administer it themselves or with the help of a third party if they could not physically do so.

The third party can be a volunteer, the doctor or the nurse treating the patient, according to the text, while the substance can be administered at the patient's home, in [care homes](#) for the elderly or care centers.

Medical experts would have 15 days to respond to a request for help to die and an approval would be valid for three months, during which time the patient could retract, Macron said.

Macron said that if [medical professionals](#) rejected the request, the patient could consult another medical team or appeal.

He added that he wanted to avoid the terms assisted suicide or euthanasia because the patient's consent is essential, with a role for medical opinion and "precise criteria".

Until now French patients in pain wishing to end their lives have had to travel abroad, including to neighboring Belgium.

A 2005 law has legalized passive euthanasia, such as withholding artificial life support, as a "right to die".

A 2016 law allows doctors to couple this with "deep and continuous sedation" for [terminally ill patients](#) in pain.

But active [euthanasia](#), whereby doctors administer lethal doses of drugs to patients suffering from an incurable condition, is illegal.

Assisted suicide—whereby patients can receive help to voluntarily take their own life—is also banned.

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