

# Scotland tables proposed assisted dying law

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A bill to make assisted dying legal was introduced in the devolved Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh on Thursday, with a poll suggesting overwhelming support for changing the law.

Should the bill be approved, Scotland, which has powers to set its own

health care policy, would become the first UK nation to provide terminally ill people with assistance to end their lives.

But it also raises the prospect of a divergence of laws between the four nations of the UK on the one hand and the wider British Isles on the other.

The self-governing islands of Jersey and the Isle of Man off the UK coast have already made moves to legalize assisted dying.

Euthanasia in the UK overall, however, is illegal and previous attempts to change the law have failed despite signs of increasing public support for the practice.

A recent Opinion poll for the Dignity in Dying charity indicated that at least 78 percent of Scots backed the latest bill.

First Minister Humza Yousaf, a practicing Muslim, has suggested he is likely to vote against the proposed legislation—a stance shared by the Church of Scotland, the Catholic Church in Scotland and the Scottish Association of Mosques.

Under the proposals contained in the Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults Bill, a patient could only request [medical assistance](#) to end their life if they had a terminal illness and had been ruled mentally fit to make the decision by two doctors.

A patient would also have to be at least 16, a resident of Scotland for at least 12 months and would have to administer the life-ending medication themselves.

**'No coercion'**

Liam McArthur, the Liberal Democrat lawmaker who introduced the bill, said "the [terminal illness](#) would need to be advanced and progressive" and the medics would have to ensure there was "no coercion".

"It has been clear for many years that an overwhelming majority of the public support a change in the law to allow more choice for dying people at the end of life," he said.

"This latest polling certainly underscores that, while also confirming that this support is to be found right across the country."

Gordon Macdonald, chief executive of Care Not Killing, which opposes the bill, said lack of effective safeguards has always been one of the "key issues" with assisted suicide and euthanasia.

"In countries which have legalized assisted suicide and euthanasia a culture of death becomes established," he said.

"There are real risks to vulnerable people that they will be pressured to end their lives prematurely."

In April 2002, the Netherlands became the first country in the world to legalize active euthanasia.

It was followed by Belgium and Luxembourg in 2009 and Spain in June 2021.

Earlier this month, French President Emmanuel Macron faced criticism from medical workers and the country's Catholic Church over a draft bill, slated for debate in May, that would allow assisted dying for certain terminally ill patients.

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