

**Committee: Social and Humanitarian  
committee**

**Topic: The question of Euthanasia and the  
right to die with Dignity**

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- **EUTHANASIA** : painless inducement of a quick death.  
Heated debates are erupting all around the world, within official and private discussions and conversations. The question of the ethics of euthanasia is posing an obstacle within the modern society

## Classification of euthanasia

- **Voluntary** euthanasia is occurs at the request of the person who dies.
- **Non-voluntary** euthanasia occurs when the person is unconscious or otherwise unable (for example, a very young baby or a person of extremely low intelligence) to make a meaningful choice between living and dying, and an appropriate person takes the decision on their behalf.
- **Involuntary** euthanasia occurs when the person who dies chooses life and is killed anyway. This is usually called murder, but it is possible to imagine cases where the killing would count as being for the benefit of the person who dies.
- **Active euthanasia:** death is brought about by an act - for example when a person is killed by being given an overdose of pain-killers. Active voluntary euthanasia is legal in Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.
- **Passive euthanasia :** death is brought about by an omission - i.e. when someone lets the person die. Passive voluntary euthanasia is legal throughout the US per Cruzan v. Director, Missouri Department of Health.

### ✓ Why euthanasia should be allowed

Those in favour of euthanasia argue that a civilised society should allow people to die in dignity and without pain, and should allow others to help them do so if they cannot manage it on their own.

They say that our bodies are our own, and we should be allowed to do what we want with them. So it's wrong to make anyone live longer than they want. In fact making people go on living when they don't want to violates their personal freedom and

human rights. It's immoral, they say to force people to continue living in suffering and pain.

## ✘ **Why euthanasia should be forbidden**

Religious opponents of euthanasia believe that life is given by God, and only God should decide when to end it.

Other opponents fear that if euthanasia was made legal, the laws regulating it would be abused, and people would be killed who didn't really want to die.

## **Major Organizations Involved:**

1. ERGO holds that voluntary euthanasia, assisted suicide, physician-assisted suicide, physician-assisted dying and self-deliverance, are all appropriate life endings depending on the individual medical and ethical circumstances.
2. WHO is governed by 192 Member States through the World Health Assembly. The Health Assembly is composed of representatives from WHO's Member States. The main tasks of the World Health Assembly are to approve the WHO programme and the budget for the following biennium and to decide major policy questions."
3. U.N.: The problematics of euthanasia were only briefly mentioned in the UN Resolution 67/139 on the Contributions to the Open-ended

Working Group on Ageing, hence the UN has made no progress on the topic of euthanasia

## **FACTS**

- In the mid-1800s, the use of morphine to treat "the pains of death" emerged, with John Warren recommending its use in 1848. A similar use of chloroform was revealed by Joseph Bullar in 1866. However, in neither case was it recommended that the use should be to hasten death. In 1870 Samuel Williams, a schoolteacher, initiated the contemporary euthanasia debate through a speech given at the Birmingham Speculative Club in England, which was subsequently published in a one-off publication entitled Essays of the Birmingham Speculative Club, the collected works of a number of members of an amateur philosophical society. Williams' proposal was to use chloroform to deliberately hasten the death of terminally ill patients.
- The first attempt to legalise euthanasia took place in the United States, when Henry Hunt introduced legislation into the General Assembly of Ohio in 1906. Hunt did so at the behest of Anna S. Hall, a wealthy heiress who was a major figure in the euthanasia movement during the early 20th century in the United States. Hall had watched her mother die after an extended battle with liver cancer, and had dedicated herself to ensuring that others would not have to endure the same suffering. Towards this end she engaged in an extensive letter writing campaign, recruited Lurana Sheldon and Maud Ballington Booth, and organised a debate on euthanasia at the annual meeting of the American Humane Association in 1905 – described by Jacob Appel as the first significant public debate on the topic in the 20th century.
- Under the 1961 Suicide Act, it is also a criminal offence in Britain, punishable by 14 years' imprisonment, to assist, aid or counsel somebody in relation to taking their own life. Nevertheless, the

authorities may decide not to prosecute in cases of euthanasia after taking into account the circumstances of the death.

- The Times (24 January 2007) reported that, according to the 2007 British Social Attitudes survey, 80% of the public said they wanted the law changed to give terminally ill patients the right to die with a doctor's help.
- In September 2009 the Director of Public Prosecutions was forced by an appeal to the House of Lords to make public the criteria that influence whether a person is prosecuted. The factors put a large emphasis on the suspect knowing the person who died and on the death being a one-off occurrence in order to avoid a prosecution.
- In the same survey, 45% supported giving patients with non-terminal illnesses the option of euthanasia. "A majority" was opposed to relatives being involved in a patient's death.

## TIMELINE OF EVENTS

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1st June 1794	In Prussia, a law was passed that reduced the punishment of a person who killed the patient with an incurable disease.
1936	Voluntary Euthanasia Society was founded in England.
October of 1939	Amid the turmoil of the outbreak of war, Hitler ordered widespread "mercy killing" of the sick and disabled
5 May, 1980	The Catholic Church issued a Declaration on Euthanasia

1984 The Netherlands Supreme Court approved  
voluntary euthanasia undunder certain  
conditions.

1995 Australia's Northern Territory approved a  
euthanasia bill

2000 The Netherlands approved voluntary  
euthanasia

2002 Belgium passed a similar law to the Dutch,  
allowing both voluntary voluntary euthanasia  
and physician-assisted suicide



## **Bibliography:**

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