



**H·I·S**  
HARARE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

66 Pendennis Rd, Harare, Zimbabwe

# ZIMUN XI

## *The Cost of Innovation:*

*Navigating the Ethical Responsibilities of Technological  
Advancements and Societal Change for Inclusive, Sustainable  
Development in a Globalised World*



**WHO**

*Discussing the Legality and Ethical Implications of Medical  
Euthanasia*

**Committee: WHO**

**Issue: *Discussing the Legality and Ethical Implications of Medical Euthanasia***

**Student Officer: Lucien de Burbure**

**Position: Co-Chair**

## INTRODUCTION

Medical euthanasia is a highly controversial topic, with both legal and ethical implications. Medical euthanasia is the process of ending the life of a patient in suffering — often terminally ill. Some see it as a compassionate way out to those in suffering, while others see it as a violation of their morals. Next comes the legality. Because the state would be directly involved in the murder of a human, many people believe it to be a crime and some even believe that it could be abused in places with substantial corruption. It could be used as a tool to dispose of people rather than a compassionate way out for those suffering. Kevorkian once stated that “dying is not a crime.” This quote takes the other side's perspective in that the crime lies not with the executioner, but with the patient. It takes away the moral implications from the legal system and instead leaves the decision with the patient.

## DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

- **Euthanasia:** intentionally ending the life of someone who is in pain
- **Terminal Illness:** a disease leading to certain death
- **Passive Euthanasia:** Withholding or withdrawing medical treatments that sustain life.
- **Active Euthanasia:** Administering lethal substances to end a patient's life.
- **Assisted Suicide:** Providing a person with the means to end their own life.
- **Palliative Care:** Specialized medical care focused on relieving pain and suffering.

## BACKGROUND ON THE ISSUE

The topic of medical euthanasia has been debated for centuries, dating back to 1870 when, according to Emanuel, “S. D. Williams, a nonphysician, proposed that anaesthetics be used to intentionally end the lives of patients.” The practice of medical euthanasia only arrived much later, though. According to Rietjens et al. the Netherlands was the first country to start practicing medical euthanasia as of 2002. After the Netherlands, a few other countries started accepting the controversial practice and, according to Gupta and Bansal, by 2023, 7 countries had legalized euthanasia.

## CURRENT CONTEXT

- **2021:** Spain legalized euthanasia, joining a small group of European nations.
- **2022:** Colombia expanded euthanasia rights to non-terminal patients.
- **2023:** Canada postponed the expansion of Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) for mental illness due to ethical concerns.

## MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATION INVOLVED

- **India:** Is very progressive towards euthanasia but lacks professionals to aid in this process.
- **Netherlands and Belgium:** Were the first two countries to legalize and create frameworks around the issue.
- **World Medical Association:** Strongly opposed and recommends palliative care instead.

## TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS

- **2002 - Netherlands Legalizes Euthanasia**
  - Became the first country to fully legalize medical euthanasia.
- **2002 - Belgium Follows Netherlands**
  - Legalized euthanasia under strict conditions.
- **2016 - Canada Introduces MAID**
  - Passed legislation allowing assisted suicide.
- **2021 - Spain Legalizes Euthanasia**
  - Became the fourth European country to allow euthanasia.
- **2023 - Canada Delays Expansion of MAID**
  - Postponed allowing assisted dying for mental illness patients.

## CURRENT CONTEXT

- **Palliative Care Development:** Many countries have improved access to palliative care as an alternative.
- **Regulation of Assisted Suicide:** Countries like Switzerland and Belgium impose strict guidelines to prevent abuse.
- **Ethical Guidelines:** Medical associations such as the World Medical Association have issued policies on euthanasia.

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

- Create better frameworks and employ/train professionals to diagnose whether a patient is eligible for euthanasia.
- Further develop devices to make euthanasia as pleasant and painless as possible.
- International guidelines which the UN could enforce to secure patient rights

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