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Background on Dutch euthanasia practice through 1994.

Dutch euthanasia law

Summary and link to full text of current Dutch law permitting euthanasia and assisted suicide.

“Number of official cases of euthanasia rise 10% in the Netherlands”

(Dutch News — April 12, 2017)

The number of official cases of euthanasia in the Netherlands rose 10% last year to 6091 and euthanasia now accounts for 4% of total deaths.....

Since the legislation was introduced in 2002, there have been a number of controversial cases, including a woman suffering from severe tinnitus and a serious alcoholic.

Death statistics from the Netherlands (July 2012)

(Statline — Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics)

Three percent of deaths in the Netherlands are the result of euthanasia or assisted suicide. Of those, 7% were done without the explicit request of the patient.

Frequently Asked Questions about euthanasia in the Netherlands

(Publication of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

“Wanted and unwanted effects of drugs used for the administration of euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide”

(EMGO — Netherlands — published 2012)

Note: *EMGO Institute for Health and Care Research is an interfaculty research institute. Its activities deal predominately with research in primary care and public health, focusing on chronic diseases and aging.*

Unwanted effects for euthanasia were:

- pain (4.4%)
- fidgeting (4.4%)
- euphoria (3.7%)
- fear (2.8%)
- dyspnoea (2.2%)
- nausea (1.6%)
- dizziness (1.1%)
- coughing (0.8%)
- convulsions (0.6%)
- hallucinations (0.6%)

Unwanted effects for physician-assisted suicide were:

- nausea (16.5%)

- euphoria (10.4%)
- dyspnoea (4.6%)
- fidgeting (1.9%)
- pain (1.6%)
- coughing (1.5%)
- dizziness (1.2%)
- fear (0.8%)
- convulsions (0.4%)

Articles

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Since the legislation was introduced in 2002, there have been a number of controversial cases, including a woman suffering from severe tinnitus and a serious alcoholic.

[“Doctor who made an 80-year-old dementia patient’s family hold her down while he gave her a lethal euthanasia injection ‘acted in good faith,’ rules Dutch review panel”](#)

(Daily Mail — February 2, 2017)

As the doctor went to administer the injection the woman tried to fight him off. the doctor then ordered the woman’s family to hold her down to give the drugs.

[“Dutch euthanasia law is used to kill alcoholic, 41, who decided death was the only way to escape his problems”](#)

(Daily Mail — December 6, 2016)

Mark Langedijk joked and drank before GP administered injections. Ditch euthanasia practice killed more than 5,500 people last year. Dutch law now includes those enduring “social isolation and loneliness.”

[“Netherlands sees sharp increase in people choosing euthanasia due to ‘mental health problems’”](#)

(Telegraph — May 11, 2016)

The Netherlands has seen a sharp increase in the number of people choosing to end their own lives due to mental health problems such as trauma caused by sexual abuse. Whereas just two people had themselves euthanised in the country in 2010 due to “insufferable” mental illness, 56 people did so last year, a trend which sparked concern among ethicists.

[“Dutch documentary awakens euthanasia debate about wider rules”](#)

(Dutch News — February 29, 2016)

A recent Dutch television documentary on euthanasia in which a 68 year-old woman suffering from semantic dementia was given a lethal injection may well herald a

turning point in what many consider to be an increasingly broader — and unacceptable — interpretation of the rules.

[“Where the prescription for autism can be death”](#)

(Washington Post — February 24, 2016)

Thus did a man in his 30s whose only diagnosis was autism become one of 110 people to be euthanized for mental disorders in the Netherlands between 2011 and 2014. That’s the rough equivalent of 2,000 people in the United States.

[“Assisted Suicide Study Questions Its Use for Mentally Ill”](#)

(New York Times — February 10, 2016)

[I]n more than half of the approved cases, people declined treatment that could have helped, and many cited loneliness as an important reason for wanting to die.

People who got assistance to die often sought help from doctors they had not seen before, and many used what the study called a “mobile end-of-life clinic” – a nurse and a doctor, funded by a local euthanasia advocacy organizatio

[“Governor should have talked to Holland before signing bill”](#)

(Press Democrat — October 7, 2015)

By: Theo Boer, Professor of Health Care Ethics at Kampen University in The Netherlands.

In 1994, the Dutch were the first in the world to officially legalize assisted dying...I was convinced that legalizing assisted dying was the wisest and most respectful route...Hearing of Brown’s decision, and without doubt any of his good intentions, my thoughts go back to our own pioneering years. As I said, we have been naive.

[“Dutch doctor in hot water for refusing to approve euthanasia”](#)

(BioEdge — September 26, 2015)

A Dutch general practitioner is being sued for *not* approving the euthanasia of a 19-year-old woman. The tragic events surrounding the death of Milou de Moor could become an important legal precedent. Ms. de Moor suffered from lupus, an autoimmune disease, from the age of 12.

[“Rise in euthanasia requests sparks concern as criteria for help widen”](#)

(Dutch News — July 3, 2015)

Since 2002, euthanasia has been effectively decriminalized in the Netherlands, as long as certain criteria are met. The Dutch position is considered by many to be the blueprint for other countries struggling with right to die issues. Yet there are concerns in the Netherlands itself about the rise in the number of cases and pressure on patients....Sometimes it’s the family who go to the doctor....And you hear anecdotally of families saying, “Mum, there’s always euthanasia.”

[“Under 12s have right to die: Dutch paediatricians”](#)

(Times Live — June 19 2015)

“We feel that an arbitrary age limit such as 12 should be changed and that each child’s ability to ask to die should be evaluated in a case-by-case basis,” said Eduard

Verhagen, paediatrics professor at Groningen University....A change in the law would bring the Netherlands in line with Belgium, which in 2014 became the first country in the world to pass a law allowing euthanasia for a young child who has the "discernment" necessary to decide to give up life.

["Dutch judge orders 'mercy killing' of 80-year-old dementia sufferer after doctors tried to stop her family from ending her life"](#)

(Daily Mail — May 18, 2015)

[F]or the first time in 13 years of legal euthanasia in the Netherlands, a court overruled the doctors' wishes and ordered that the euthanasia go ahead...A day later she was taken from the care home and killed by the Life End Clinic, which was set up with the aim of making euthanasia more easily accessible in the Netherlands.

["Dutch Court Clears Man Who Helped His 99-Year-Old Mother Die"](#)

(New York Times — May 13, 2015)

[A] case that aimed to create precedents for assisting suicide...While euthanasia has been legal in the Netherlands for years if carried out by a physician, assisted suicide by a friend or relative of the person who wants to die remains illegal.

["The Last Days of Annie Bus: A Chronicle of Dutch Euthanasia"](#)

(Spiegel — February 4, 2015)

Annie Bus of the Netherlands suffered from horrendous pain and paralysis, but not from a terminal illness. She wanted to die anyway. The story of how she got her wish demonstrates how difficult it is to set boundaries in a country that permits assisted suicide...Bus turned to a clinic that specializes in assisted suicide.

["Euthanasia Cases Leap 73% at Cautioned Clinic"](#)

(Netherlands Times — February 12, 2015)

The Levenseindekliniek helped 232 people with their request to die in 2014, 98 more than in 2013...Just over a third of the people who requested euthanasia did so because of a psychiatric disorder...The youngest patient last year was 24 years old and the oldest patient was 103 years old.

["Number of mentally ill patients killed by euthanasia in Holland trebles in a year as doctors warn assisted suicide is 'out of control'"](#)

(Daily Mail — October 3, 2014)

Forty-two people with mental illnesses killed by lethal injection in Holland last year. This is three times more than the number who were euthanised in 2012. Overall figures for assisted deaths show a 15 percent surge in a year. Doctors warn that the Dutch euthanasia experiment is "out of control."

["Is fear of nursing homes a reason for Dutch euthanasia?"](#)

(Bioedge — August 30, 2014)

A Dutch euthanasia clinic is being investigated for helping an elderly woman to die because she did not want to live in a nursing home.

[“Don’t make our mistake: As assisted suicide bill goes to Lords, Dutch watchdog who once backed euthanasia warns UK of ‘slippery slope’ to mass deaths”](#)

(Mail Online — July 9, 2014)

Professor Boer admitted he was “wrong — terribly wrong, in fact” to have believed regulated euthanasia would work.

“I used to be a supporter of the Dutch law. But now, with 12 years of experience, I take a very different view.”

[“Pharmacists sometimes refuse to give doctors euthanasia drugs”](#)

(Dutch News — April 16, 2014)

Most refusals concern “controversial” cases, i.e. patients who have dementia, a psychiatric illness or who consider their lives “complete.”

[“Dutch ex-minister Els Borst found dead”](#)

(Guardian UK — February 11, 2014)

Police rule out natural causes and say postmortem will show whether it was accident or crime.

Els Borst was the former health minister who drafted the 2002 Dutch law permitting euthanasia, has been found dead in her garage. She was 81.

[Note: In 2009, Borst told the [Daily Mail](#) that the law was brought in “far too early” She admitted that medical care for the terminally ill had declined since the law came into effect and said more should have been done legally to protect people who wanted to die natural deaths.]

[“Martinuk: Suicide prevention plans at odds with right to die”](#)

(Calgary Herald — January 3, 2014)

A report in Current Oncology in 2011 summarized euthanasia in the Netherlands by saying that in 30 years, it “has moved from euthanasia of people who are terminally ill, to euthanasia of those who are chronically ill; from euthanasia for physical illness, to euthanasia for mental illness; from euthanasia for mental illness, to euthanasia for psychological distress of mental suffering,” and now to euthanasia of those over 70 who are simply “tired of living.”

[“Healthcare freedom of choice under threat, entire hospitals excluded”](#)

(Dutch News — November 27, 2013)

Health insurance companies are limiting patient access to some hospitals, and some policy holders will have to pay a contribution to be treated in hospitals with a better reputation, according to research by the AD and insurance comparison website independent.

[“Man guilty of helping mother to die acted out of love, says court”](#)

(Dutch News — October 22, 2013)

A man who helped his 99-year-old mother to die because the family doctor was unwilling to help has been found guilty of committing a crime but will not face punishment.

[“Woman, 70, is given euthanasia after going blind”](#)

(Dutch News — October 7, 2013)

Specialist Lia Bruin told the paper that the woman's case was exceptional. “She was, for example, obsessed by cleanliness and could not stand being unable to see spots on her clothes.”

[“Number of Dutch killed by euthanasia rises by 13 percent”](#)

(Telegraph — September 24, 2013)

The number of Dutch people killed by medical euthanasia has more than doubled in the 10 years since legislation was changed to permit it, rising 13 percent last year to 4,188.

[“Mobile death squads to kill sick and elderly in their own homes leads to surge in suicide rates in the Netherlands”](#)

(Daily Mail, United Kingdom — September 24, 2013)

One in 30 deaths in Holland are now from euthanasia....”In that kind of culture euthanasia becomes expected and inevitable and everything else— such as good palliative care and a functional hospice movement — is gradually portrayed as rather selfish. ”

[“75,000 US Euthanasia Death a Year at Dutch Rate”](#)

(National Review Online — September 24, 2013)

If the same 3% death-by-euthanasia rate were to occur in the USA, 75,000 of such deaths would occur annually.

[“Please, doctor, put him out of our misery”](#)

(Mercator.net — June 14, 2013)

In a stunning development, dutch doctors say that the anguish of parents is another reason to euthanase disabled babies.

[“Dutch Docs Pushed to Euthanaize More Demented”](#)

(National Review — June 2, 2013)

It is rare when the government has to push Netherlander doctors to be more aggressive with euthanasia. But that is what is happening around the killing of Alzheimer's patients based on an advance directive.

[“Netherlands: ‘Doctors: euthanasia for dementia patients should be restricted’”](#)

(Press Europe — May 16, 2013)

As a GP cited by *Volkscrant* explains: “In respecting his or her will, we pay homage to a patient who was once alive, and not to a human being who no longer knows if he or she exists.”

[“Euthanasia for sick babies is not a ‘slippery slope’”](#)

(Onmedica — May 2, 2013)

According to Professor Julian Savulescu, “Discussion of infanticide should be contextualized in those practices that end life....Infanticide is an important issue and

worthy of scholarly attention because it touches on an area of concern that few societies have had the courage to tackle openly and honestly: euthanasia.”

“Number of assisted suicide cases reported by Dutch doctors rose in 2011”

(Washington Post — September 26, 2012)

The number of doctor-assisted suicide cases reported in the Netherlands grew by 559 between the years of 2010 and 2011, a commission says. The Euthanasia Commission, set up by the government, found that doctor-reported cases made up about 2.7 percent of all deaths in the Netherlands in 2011, from 2.3 percent in 2010.

[Note: This article erroneously states that the Dutch euthanasia law is permitted only if patients are terminally ill. The [law](#) does not require that the patient have a terminal illness.]

“Holland Targets Its Drugs-and-Death Tourism”

(Forbes — April 4, 2012)

Officially only Dutch residents should receive medical assistance to commit suicide. But the law doesn’t prohibit doctors from administering euthanasia to non-residents. It’s not the existence of assisted-suicide tourism that’s behind the latest controversy but, rather, the implicit danger that it could spin out of control.

“Push for the Right to Die Grows in the Netherlands”

(New York Times — April 2, 2012)

In 1989, Dr. Petra deJong gave a man pentobarbital, a powerful barbiturate — but not enough. It took him nine hours to die. “I realize now that I did things wrong,” Dr. de Jong, 58, said from her office here. “Today you can Google it, but we didn’t know.”

She also noted that the law requires review committees to sign off on every reported case of euthanasia, but that 469 cases from 2010 had still not been reviewed, meaning it was not clear how well doctors were adhering to the official guidelines.

“Inside a Story About Helping the Elderly to Die”

(New York Times — April 2, 2012)

Euthanasia is widely accepted in the Netherlands for those whose suffering is “unbearable,” but Dr. Petra de Jong’s group is seeking to extend help in dying to everyone aged 70 or over, even if they aren’t sick. She argues that by insisting on “unbearable suffering,” the law fails old people who have decided that their lives are complete.

“Netherlands debates extending euthanasia legislation”

(Europe Online — March 9, 2012)

People aged over 70 who feel their life no longer has meaning should be allowed to commit assisted suicide even if they do not suffer from terminal or incurable diseases, according to a proposal debated by the Dutch parliament late Thursday.

“Dutch euthanasia clinic offers mobile service”

(CNN — March 3, 2012)

"In some scenarios, de Jong [clinic spokeswoman Walburg de Jong] says, the clinic's focus is not on euthanizing the patient as much as it is on ensuring the doctor feels comfortable committing to the process, and maybe afterwards or in the process he can say, 'Well, I can do it myself,' or afterwards he can say, 'The second time I can do it myself.'"

"Traveling dutch euthanasia clinic swamped with requests"

(Sacramento Bee — March 3, 2012)

The Dutch mobile euthanasia clinics that began offering assisted death in people's homes last week received nearly 60 requests within their two first days of operation. Petra de Jong, director of the Dutch right-to-die foundation NVVE said "If the number of requests continue growing at this rate, we'll have to put in place more mobile teams in April."

"Dutch offered 'euthanasia on wheels'"

(BBC News — March 2, 2012)

The new units consist of a doctor, a nurse and all the medical equipment required to carry out euthanasia. Patients can choose injections administered by the medical team, or they may drink a lethal concoction of life-ending drugs.

"Dutch mobile euthanasia units to make house calls"

(The Guardian — March 1, 2012)

Sick people or their relatives can submit their applications via telephone or email and if the patient's request fulfills a number of strict criteria, the team is then dispatched. "They will first give the patient an injection, which will put them into a deep sleep, then a second injection follows, which will stop their breathing and heart beat."

The teams would be limited to one house visit a week to minimize the psychological burden on them.

"Go-ahead for world's first mobile euthanasia unit that will allow patients to die at home"

(Mail Online — February 10, 2012)

The world's first mobile team to administer euthanasia in patients' homes will be launched next month....They are expected to send the number of euthanasia cases in Holland soaring, with pro-campaigners claiming they will end the lives of an additional 1,000 patients a year....It is likely to be used with mentally ill patients or those with early dementia....In Holland, euthanasia is carried out by administering a strong sedative to put the patient in a coma, followed by a drug to stop breathing and cause death.

"Euthanasia on wheels' starts next month"

(Radio Netherlands Worldwide — February 6, 2012)

Six specialised euthanasia teams consisting of one doctor and one nurse will begin making house calls in the Netherlands next month.

“Senile 64-year-old Dutch woman is euthanised even though she was no longer able to express her wish to die”

(Daily Mail – November 9, 2011)

The unnamed woman was a long-term supporter of the controversial practice and had made a written statement when she was still well, saying how she wished to die....

A report released earlier this year revealed a total of 21 patients with early-stage dementia, including Alzheimer’s died by lethal injection in Holland in 2010....The 2010 figures also show another year-on-year rise in cases, with 2,700 people choosing to die by injection, compared to 2,636 the year before.

“Euthanasia becoming integral part of Dutch medicine”

(BioEdge – September 17, 2011)

Among the main conclusions of a ten year study (“The role of the physician in the voluntary termination of life”) by the Dutch medical association are:

If a doctor does not want to participate, “there is a moral and professional duty to provide patients with timely assistance in finding a physician who does not have fundamental objections to euthanasia and assisted suicide,”

and

“If the patient does not have unbearable suffering, he may not be euthanased, but he can decide to stop eating and drinking. In that case, the doctor must respect this decision and “is obligated, in such cases, to supervise the patient and to alleviate the suffering by arranging effective palliative care.”

“Euthanasia advice redefines suffering”

(Radio Netherlands Worldwide – September 8, 2011)

A new [position paper](#) just published by the Dutch Physicians Association (KNMG) says unbearable and lasting suffering should not be the only criteria physicians consider when a patient requests euthanasia....Until now, factors such as income or a patient’s social life played almost no role when physicians were considering a euthanasia request. However, the new guidelines will certainly change that.

“Dutch doctors solidly behind euthanasia: Poll”

(BioEdge – August 4, 2011)

The vast majority – 87% – were willing in principle to participate in legal euthanasia....About 65% were not willing if patients are simply tired of living – although 20% were willing....Most doctors are satisfied with the current state of euthanasia regulation in the Netherlands – about 75%. And in response to the statement “euthanasia has no place in a general practice”, 89% disagreed.

“Dutch doctors wary of euthanasia for dementia”

(Radio Netherlands Worldwide – June 26, 2011)

33 percent of Dutch doctors are willing to use euthanasia in case of early

dementia. The number of people with dementia who have resorted to euthanasia has risen from three in 2006 to 21 in 2010.

“Fearful elderly people carry ‘anti-euthanasia cards’”

(Telegraph, United Kingdom — April 22, 2011)

Elderly people in the Netherlands are so fearful of being killed by doctors that they carry cards saying they do not want euthanasia, according to a campaigner who says allowing assisted suicide in Britain would put the vulnerable at risk. In an article published in the British Medical Journal (4/11), Kevin Fitzpatrick a researcher for Not Dead Yet said, “Disabled people, like others, and often with more reason, need to feel safe. Thus, eroding what may already be a shaky sense of safety in medical care poses a further threat to disabled people’s well being, continuing care, and life itself.”

“Dutch suicide clinic proposal”

(Radio Netherlands Worldwide – – August 9, 2010)

In Holland, the feasibility of a suicide clinic to “assist people with chronic psychiatric problems, with Alzheimer’s or dementia and people who feel they have ‘completed’ their life” is being considered. A Dutch euthanasia advocacy group would like to see the “life’s end” clinic made part of an ordinary hospital or nursing home.

“Sharp growth in euthanasia deaths”

(DutchNews – – June 16, 2010)

The number of reported euthanasia deaths in the Netherlands rose 13% last year following an increase of 10% in the previous year. A reason for the increase could be that the taboo surrounding euthanasia is fading in Holland.

“Now the Dutch turn against legalised mercy killing” by Simon Caldwell

(*Daily Mail*, United Kingdom, 12/9/09)

Dr. Els Borst, the architect of Holland’s euthanasia law, now says it was a mistake. Cases of euthanasia in the country have increased and there are allegations of thousands of cases of involuntary euthanasia and dozens of killings of disabled newborns.

“Euthanasia, Assisted Suicide Drop in the Netherlands After Law” but one out of five euthanasia and assisted suicide deaths are not reported even though the law requires such reporting. (*Bloomberg News*, 5/9/07)

“Dutch Euthanasia” by Wesley J. Smith (*First Things*, 4/2/07)

A revealing glimpse of the subtle and not-so-subtle ways vulnerable patients are pressured into euthanasia and assisted suicide.

“Killing Babies, Compassionately: The Netherlands follows in Germany’s footsteps” by Wesley J. Smith (*Weekly Standard*, 3/27/06)

Italian official causes outrage in Holland for his comments on Dutch plans to officially permit child euthanasia.

“Dutch ponder ‘mercy killing’ rules” (CNN, 12/1/04)

“Death by Committee” (Weekly Standard, 12/2/04)

Now They Want to Euthanize Children (Weekly Standard, 9/13/04)

Translation of Dutch health minister’s interview

Els Borst, Dutch minister of health and longtime euthanasia advocate was interviewed by a Dutch newspaper immediately following passage of a law to legalize euthanasia and assisted suicide. In the interview she said she is not opposed to providing a suicide pill for the elderly. Her comments caused an international outcry. (See news coverage below.) This is the English translation of the original Dutch article.

United Nations Committee concerned about Dutch euthanasia

The U.N. Human Rights Committee, expressing concerns about many aspects of the new Dutch law regarding euthanasia and assisted suicide, has asked that the law be re-examined. (7/01)

The Dutch Way of Death Every legal and professional barrier to euthanasia has been demolished, often by doctors themselves. (Wall Street Journal, 4/28/01)

Dutch Courage State-sanctioned killing comes to the Netherlands. (Wall Street Journal, 4/25/01)

Dutch way of death Dutch Health Minister now urging government to permit suicide pills for healthy old people. (San Francisco Chronicle, 4/20/01)

At Death’s Door German newspaper describes “horror” of new Dutch law. (Frankfurter Allgemeine, 4/10/01)

Dutch legalise euthanasia

International reaction to legalization of euthanasia in the Netherlands. (CNN 4/10/01).

Dutch GP found guilty of murder faces no penalty (British Medical Journal, 3/3/01)

An Amsterdam court found Dutch physician Wilfred van Oijen guilty of murder for euthanizing a patient without the patient’s request and without seeking a second opinion. The court ruled that van Oijen had made an “error in judgment” but said he had done what he thought best for his patient and therefore imposed no prison sentence.

Van Oijen's euthanasia practice was favorably featured on Dutch and American television in 1994.(see: [Dutch TV airs a real euthanasia death.](#))

For a commentary on the television death of van Oijen's patient, see [Selling Death and Dignity.](#)

[Dutch parliament votes](#) Action taken by Dutch parliament to legalize practices that have been taking place for many years. (*IAETF Update* 2000, vol. 14, no. 3)

[Going Dutch](#)

We ignore the Netherlands at our own peril. *National Review Online* (12/18/00)

[“Dutch vote to legalize euthanasia”](#)

By a vote of 104-40, the lower house of the Dutch parliament has approved a law making euthanasia legal. It must now receive approval of the Dutch Senate. That vote is expected next year.

CNN-Europe (11/28/00)

[“Euthanasia deaths ‘not easy’”](#)

(British Broadcasting Company regarding Dutch research)

Attempts by doctors to help people suffering from fatal illness take their own lives failed to give an “easy death” in one in five cases, researchers say.

[Euthanasia consultants or facilitators?](#) Few euthanasia consultants in the Netherlands act as independent evaluators of the patient's situation. (*Medical Journal of Australia*, 1999; 179:351-352)