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EXIT A.D.M.D. Suisse romande, Geneva

EXIT (Deutsche Schweiz), Zürich

DIGNITAS – To live with dignity –
To die with dignity, Forch

EX International, Berne

Lifecircle, Biel-Benken

Pegasos Swiss Association, Basel

World Right to Die Day, 2 November 2021

Call to lawmakers: Better respect for the end-of-life choices of your citizens, please!

When suffering individuals are barred from access to voluntary assisted dying, this is often caused by lawmakers. For this reason, today the [World Federation of Right to Die Societies](#) demands recognition for the inherent right to die. In Switzerland, the right to one's own death is generally recognised. In a joint call, the six Swiss Self-Determination Associations request lawmakers to respect individual end-of-life decision and refers to the situation in Europe, where aid in dying is still a criminal offence in some countries.

In Greece, Poland or England, aid in dying is punished with up to 14 years imprisonment. In Italy and France, severely suffering individuals have been begging for a humane solution for many years. In Germany and Portugal, opponents are at work who continuously try to block or narrow the right to decide on the time and manner of one's own end in life. Even in otherwise progressive Scandinavia little is developing. Those in Europe who would like to cut short a long suffering often rely on the courage of doctors helping illegally, or they have to resort to a violent suicide.

With its liberal-progressive access to physician-supported professionally accompanied suicide, Switzerland, for 40 years, has been an international role model for freedom of choice, self-determination, and self-responsibility in regard of "the last human right". The six Swiss Self-Determination Associations engaging in this together count members close to the size of a Swiss Federal Political Party.

Switzerland as an international role model

The freedom to decide on the time and manner of one's own end in life is a human right and a personal decision, which has to be respected up front. In 2011, the [European Court of Human Rights confirmed this](#). Since then, further court judgments, for example in [Germany](#) and in [Austria](#), confirmed this right to freedom. It includes making use of voluntary and professional assistance by others, so as to end one's life in dignity. A growing number of countries enacts or at least discusses laws for professional assisted suicide and/or voluntary euthanasia, such as for example Spain, Portugal, Scotland, Australia, etc.

With its progressive legislation in many areas, including assisted suicide, advance health care planning, palliative care, advance health care planning and good care for the aging, Switzerland

sets a highly regarded example worldwide. The Swiss Self-Determination Associations are committed to safeguarding and further developing this humanitarian approach. They not only conduct physician-supported accompanied suicide within the frame of law in Switzerland. Even more they network with interfaces to hospitals, care facilities, hospices, health care professionals, etc. In order to improve quality of care and freedom of choice, they engage in a comprehensive approach to educate and fill in information gaps, both for seriously ill persons and for institutions and experts who treat and care for them.

Empowerment through freedom of choice

Despite remarkable progress in medical science, improved end-of-life options, patients' rights, palliative and hospice care etc., not everyone finds relief and a quality of life they personally deem acceptable. They wish for and should have a right to end their suffering and life at home, at a time of their choice, legally, in a safe way, assisted professionally, and surrounded by their loved ones.

Having the option does not necessarily mean using it. Many feel empowered by knowing they have that choice once their suffering becomes unbearable. They are relieved to know there is a safe "emergency exit" available; it gives them peace of mind and, most importantly, the courage to live on.

Denying choice and not allowing the possibility of suicide and corresponding help right from the outset leads to a person feeling rejected and left alone, increasing the likelihood that he or she will attempt a risky, lonely suicide. This is often done by means that do not lead to death but instead cause even more suffering. Access to assisted dying is an element of suicide attempt prevention.

Lawmakers should respect their citizens' end-of life choices

In a joint call, the six Swiss Self-Determination Associations remind lawmakers that citizens everywhere deserve to have the right and the freedom to end their suffering and life at home. For this, they should be allowed to make use of assistance, in order to do so in a safe manner and in presence of their loved ones so that they do not have to take on them the often painful and strenuous journey to Switzerland or a risky suicide attempt.

It is time for lawmakers to respect their citizens' freedom of choice and self-determination in end-of-life decisions in their own country. There is no reason why what has in practice worked well in Switzerland since 1982 should not work in other countries too

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