

Euthanasia campaigners came together at a world congress lasting several days

For decades, the world's euthanasia organizations have met every two years for a World Congress, each time on a different continent. This time it took place from 2 to 5 November in Toronto, Canada.

The 2022 Congress was held on 2 November, which has been "Right-to-die Day" for years. <https://hpd.de/artikel/jederzeit-muss-jeder-mensch-gehen-koennen-wenn-er-es-fuer-notwendig-und-fuer-angebracht-haelt-19842>, through the unveiling of a world map <https://wfrtds.org/world-right-to-die-day-2022-2/> opened. On this card, portraits of personalities from 18 countries are deposited, explaining why this person is in favor of euthanasia. It is intended to show the solidarity of the euthanasia organizations, which all campaigned for the same goal: the right to decide one's own death at the end of life. It is impressive how many people speak openly about their attitudes to the issue, and it is a pity that representatives from Asian countries did not also speak out. Lifecircle has many members, especially in Japan, who want to keep the option of assisted dying open.

The World Congress of Euthanasia Organizations really got going the following day. Thursday was dedicated to the General Assembly of the World Federation, which has its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland <https://wfrtds.org>. The meeting emphasized the desire for the closest possible cooperation between the various organizations. Last year, a "working group advocacy", a "legal matters" and one concerning "public relations and media" were formed. Contacts with the WHO, the EU and striving for NGO status are important goals. Regarding terminology, it was agreed that within the World Federation the terms "euthanasia" and "suicide" should no longer be used, as both terms have negative connotations. The term "assisted dying" (AD) should be used for assisted suicide as well as for active euthanasia.

The actual congress took place on the two days of 4th and 5th of November, under the leadership of Dying with Dignity Canada <https://www.dyingwithdignity.ca>. The various presentations showed the efforts and success that have gone into legalizing self-determination at the end of life in many countries in recent years: Australia, New Zealand, some states in the USA, Colombia, Germany, Austria, Spain and Italy have legalized and been able to carry out the first cases of medically assisted dying.

What Canada has achieved since the legalization of MAID (Medical Aid in Dying) six years ago is particularly impressive. A network of family physicians, palliative care physicians, intensive care physicians and nurse-practitioners has been established across the vast country of Canada. There are clear guidelines under which circumstances assisted dying can be carried out, and more and more doctors are being trained by medical professionals who already have a lot of experience with MAID. An intensive care physician explained how much he thrives on the gratitude of patients when he can ensure self-determined dying in addition to saving their lives. One does not exclude the other, it's the patient's choice. For him, this is an expansion of his horizons, not only through his rescue helicopter, but also by the possibility of consciously shortening incurable suffering. It is also important to mention here that in Canada AD is considered as a "medical treatment". Since the doctors and medical nurses who take care of assisted dying are backed by the large project "CAMAP" <https://camapcanada.ca>, many studies on AD can also be realized.

Several presentations showed the difficulty that assisted dying is not accepted by doctors working in palliative medicine, as a decision made by people capable of judgement. Thanks to tireless efforts, however, there are nevertheless clear tendencies in various countries that in future palliative physicians will also respect the wish for a self-determined end of life. Just like the living will, the verbally communicated will of people, capable of judgement, must be taken into account in the

doctor's decision. In some countries, it is possible to make a written declaration that an assisted suicide can be carried out even in the event of a loss of capacity.

A noticeable number of presentations dealt with the situation of dementia, which is clearly increasing in all countries due to the ever-increasing life expectancy. Three contributions showed the fates of people with this disease, who were able to die assisted in individual cases. Relatives described the positive effects on patients and their family members, of having choice of AD.

Different models of AD in different countries were presented and discussed at two panel events. All organizations are working towards legalizing AD in even more countries as soon as possible, because "death tourism", (the journey to Switzerland to be able to enter into a peaceful and safe death) is inhumane. It will stop when the World Federation has achieved its goal: worldwide legalization of self-determined dying, not only by palliative medicine or by fasting for death, but also by AD.

During a farewell dinner on the evening of 5 November, there was once again a lively exchange. In addition, prizes were awarded to personalities who have been particularly committed to the human right of self-determination even at the end of life. Among others, Rob Jonquière, Communications Director of the World Federation, should be mentioned. He has dedicated his entire life to the conviction that every human being has the right to decide whether to be or not to be.

We are already looking forward to the next Congress of the World Federation, which will be held in 2024.