

Annual Report 2022 Regional Euthanasia Review Committees (RTE)

Press release | 04-04-2023 Utrecht - The annual report of the RTE for 2022 has been presented to Minister Ernst Kuipers of the Ministry of VWS. In 2022, the RTE received 8,720 notifications of euthanasia. That is 5.1% of the total number people who died in the Netherlands last year.

Further increase in number of reports

In 2022 again we have seen an increase in the number of reports of euthanasia¹. This time an increase of 13.7% compared to 2021. This upward trend is visible over a longer period, both in absolute terms as in relation to the mortality rate. There is no scientific research available that provides insight into the cause of the increase. This means that no substantiated prediction can be made about the further development of the number of reports.

A careful euthanasia practice

In thirteen of the reports assessed in the past year (0.15%), the RTE reached a verdict that the physician did not act in accordance with the statutory due diligence requirements when performing euthanasia. This percentage is not high in relation to previous years and remains so little that without a doubt the conclusion can be drawn that the Dutch practice of euthanasia is very careful. This means that doctors in the vast majority act prudently. This annual report contains ten anonymised opinions which conclude that the requirements have not been met. We had to conclude that almost all of these judgments could have been avoided if the Euthanasia Code had been followed properly (Euthanasia Code 2022 | Regional Review Committees Euthanasia (euthanasiecommissie.nl)).

Steadily growing workload leads to higher lead times

The steadily growing number of reports of euthanasia means a steady increase for the RTE workload. This was very high in 2022. The average processing time of a report has increased by 6% to 34 days. In 2023, the RTE will be expanded by ten members to reduce the workload.

Reports over twenty years

2022 was the twentieth year after the Termination of Life Review at Request and Assisted Suicide Act (Wtl) came into force, the law that legalized euthanasia and ensured it was regulated in the Netherlands. The RTE checks every report of euthanasia against the requirements set out in the Wtl for diligence. In these twenty years, 91,565 reports of euthanasia have been tested by RTE. Of these, only 133 did not meet the legal criteria.

The RTE

The RTE assesses whether a physician who has performed euthanasia has complied with the legal requirements. The RTE is independent in its judgment and reports annually.

Note for editors

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¹ The term euthanasia includes termination of life on request and assisted suicide.