



D18 The Swiss Approach of Assistance to Suicide

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Attendees will learn the legal and ethical aspects linked to assistance to suicide in Switzerland and compare them with those in other countries. This presentation will describe how, while it is quite unusual in most of European countries and in the USA, the practice of assisted to suicide is quite common in Switzerland.

Similar to euthanasia, assisted suicide is a subject that induces much discussion in many countries. While the law is very liberal in some countries such as Belgium and the Netherlands, this practice is very controversial in other countries such as France where it remains a forbidden subject.

In the United States of America, the laws concerning assisted suicide are very different from one state to another. For example, in Oregon assisted suicide is allowed if performed by a medical doctor. In other states, this act is condemnable. In Canada it is also punishable according to their Criminal Code, section 41. In Switzerland euthanasia is condemnable by law. However, the penal code doesn't condemn assisted suicide, whether it is by a medical doctor or another person, as long as it is not conducted by a selfish motive. The application of these practices has simplified in recent years and two societies for the right to die with dignity based on this principle born (Exit and Dignitas).

In the French and German speaking parts of Switzerland the association Exit assists individuals living in Switzerland with serious progressive and incurable disease, in ending their life. The association Dignitas, in the German speaking part of Switzerland, assists terminally ill individuals coming from foreign countries. Therefore, Dignitas every year assists several individuals from Germany where assisted suicide is not available at the present time.

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