

**Committee:** World Health Organization

**State:** United Kingdom

**Agenda: Legalization of Euthanasia**

World Health Organization (WHO) which was founded in 1948, connects people, nations, and partners all around the world to promote health and keep the world safe. With the main goal of helping everyone attain the highest level of health, the WHO is continuing to work relentlessly. As the representative of the United Kingdom, we are ambitious to draw a conclusion that will please the United Nations from this meeting of WHO about the Legalization of Euthanasia.

The United Kingdom (UK) is a country located in Europe, on the north-western coast of the continental mainland. It comprises England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. While the opinions of the citizens of the United Kingdom have shown varying results in different studies, the people are generally opposed to euthanasia due to their religious affiliation. Therefore, euthanasia is illegal in the UK and those who cause assisted suicide to occur could be prosecuted as if it is the same as murder or manslaughter. Under section 2 of the Suicide Act 1961, a person judged to have assisted suicide is liable to imprisonment for up to 14 years.[[1]](#footnote-1) However, it is not prohibited to give patients remedies to reduce their pain, which could automatically shorten their lives. Patients carry the right to refuse treatment on any occasion. In North Ireland, euthanasia is prohibited and could result in legal sanctions. “Helping or encouraging someone else's suicide” is prohibited by Section 13 of the Criminal Justice Act of 1966. PPS (Public Prosecution Service) is the organ that investigates whether to bring charges in specific circumstances. In England and Wales, euthanasia is prohibited and is punishable by law. Section 2 of the Suicide Act forbids suicide as modified by the Justice and Coroners Act of 2009. The Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) is the responsible person who evaluates each case individually to determine whether to prosecute or not. Also, some specific rules released in 2010 serve as a guide to be taken into account. Since April 2009, 167 cases have been reported by the Crown Prosecution Service that was consulted, of which three have been accomplished with persecutions. In Scotland, no specific offense is associated with assisting suicide and any related offense would be prosecuted in accordance with the homicide law. The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service is the body to determine whether to bring a case or not.

The policy of the United Kingdom is against euthanasia but there are several proposals to alter the current legislation. Baroness Meacher, [[2]](#footnote-2)a former social worker, crossbench peer, and the Chair of Dignity in Dying, introduced a private members bill on assisted dying on 26 May 2021. The Bill seeks to “enable adults who are terminally ill to be provided at their request with specified assistance to end their own life”. It applies only to people who are over the age of 18, have a terminal illness, have the mental capacity to make the decision, have made a voluntary request to end their own lives, and have been ordinarily resident in England and Wales for at least a year. “Terminally ill” is defined in the Bill as having an inevitably progressive condition, diagnosed by a doctor, which cannot be reversed (as opposed to alleviated) by treatment and where, as a result of which, death is reasonably expected within six months. Under this Bill, a terminally ill person who wants to have assisted death would need to make an application to the High Court by the way of a declaration of their voluntary, settled, informed wish to end their own life. The declaration, which can be withdrawn at any time, would need to be witnessed by a non-family member, not involved in the person’s care and countersigned by a doctor from whom the assisted death had been requested (the “attending doctor”) and a suitably qualified independent doctor. The two doctors would need to affirm that the person met the eligibility criteria under the Bill; and had been informed of the palliative, hospice, and other care that was available. When there would be any doubts about the capacity of a person to make the declaration, the opinion of an independent psychiatrist would need to be sought. The High Court would confirm if the declaration is valid and then provide a date on which it would take effect. Following confirmation from the High Court, the Bill would permit the attending doctor to prescribe medication for that person to end their own life. The medication could be delivered to the patient by that doctor, another doctor, or a nurse but only after two weeks have passed since the declaration took effect. While the medication must be self-administered, the health professional would be permitted to prepare a medical device or otherwise help the person to self-administer. The health professional would need to remain with the person until they die or until they decide not to take the medicine, in which case it would be immediately removed and returned to the pharmacy as soon as it is practicable. The Bill has provisions to permit the Secretary of State to publish a code of practice for, among other things the assessment of a person seeking assisted death; the counseling to be made available, and the arrangements for delivering medicines and the degree of assistance that can be provided. The Chief Medical Officer for either England or Wales is required to monitor assisted death under Bill’s provisions and report annually to either the Parliament or the Senedd. The Bill includes a clause stating that “A person is not under any duty whether by contract or arising from any statutory or another legal requirement to participate in anything authorized by this act to which that person has a conscientious objection.”

Finally, to add, the Government of the United Kingdom is eager to find a solution that would have worldwide effects to end the dilemma of euthanasia. We certainly trust that our committee will be successful in comprehensively investigating, arguing over, and concluding our agenda.

1. <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/assisted-dying-bill-hl/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.bma.org.uk/media/4400/bma-pad-map-and-uk-legislative-proposals-aug-2021.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)