The definition of euthanasia in the Oxford English Dictionary is “The practice of killing without pain a person or animal who is suffering from a disease that cannot be cured.” Euthanasia is classified depending on the nature of the actions to two groups: active euthanasia and passive euthanasia. Active (aggressive) euthanasia is killing a patient by active means, for example, injecting a patient with a lethal dose of drug. Passive (negative) euthanasia is intentionally letting a patient die by withholding artificial life support such as a ventilator or feeding tube. Also euthanasia may be classified into three types, according to the patient’s information level: voluntary, non-voluntary and involuntary.When the patient give their full constent that they understand what will happen, this is an voluntary action. Non-voluntary euthanasia occurs when theperson is unconscious or otherwise unable to make a meaningful choice between living and dying, and an appropriate person takes the decision on their behalf. And lastly involuntary euthanasia occurs when euthanasia is performed on a person who would be able to provide informed consent, but does not, either because they do not want to die, or because they were not asked. The killing of a patient suffering from an incurable and painful disease is called mercy-killing. According to this definition it can be said that mercy-killing is a synonym for euthanasia.

Euthanasia was first appeared in Ancient Greece and Rome, at that time attitudes toward active euthanasia and suicide had tended to be tolerant. But with the ascendancy of Christianity, life is a trusut from God, reinforced the views of the Hippocratic school (which forbid euthanasia). In the begging of 17th century even discussing about euthanasia wasn’t possible in Christan Europe. But with the Englightment, writers assaulted the church's authoritative teaching on all matters, including euthanasia and suicide. The word euthanasia was first used in a medical sense by Francis Bacon in the 17th century. In 1957, the Vatican declared that passive euthanasia was acceptable.The first law in the world that allowed the use of passive euthanasia was passed in the California state of USA. As of November 2021, euthanasia is legal in Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain and several states of Australia.

In Denmark the passive form of euthanasia is legal even though the active euthanasia is not. The parliament of Denmark has appointed ethical panels each time that the legalization of euthanasia have recommended. However it is still not specifically outlawed. And a study published in 2003 showed that 41% of deaths under medical charge involved doctors decided to take the lives of patients to reduce pain before death- about 1% were with prescription drugs. Christianity is the leading religion in Denmark. In Christianity, also in some other religions, the general belief is that all life is God-given, and it can only be taken back by God. This belief contradicts the purpose of euthanasia. And not only for that, it may be too much of a task for doctors to authorize active euthanasia. Many more reasons like these can be said for the legality of euthanasia.

As Denmark we are open to different ideas on this topic. We look forward to learning about each country’s own policies on euthanasia at this conference. Until now, euthanasia has not been fully legalized in our parliement due to moral dilemma, and we are not planning to change our perspective until we find a complete answers to these moral problems as a country. We hope that this conference will be an answer to the dilemmas we have.