

Assisted Dying and Minors Is the right to die moving closer for minors? (Karen Joan Sutton, Griffith College Dublin)

Since the legalising of assisted dying in the Netherlands and Belgium in 2002, assisted dying practices have been legalised in eighteen jurisdictions, with over two hundred million people now having access to assisted dying around the world. While further jurisdictions are progressing or debating the legalising of assisted dying. The legislation legalising assisted dying incorporates both substantive and procedural requirements, however, the form of assistance provided in facilitating assisted dying may vary from euthanasia to assisted dying to physician assisted suicide. These requirements primarily relate to waiting periods, the patient's health, the role of the physician and reporting procedures, albeit differences may exist in the level of detail contained within the legislation. Another requirement is the minimum age at which assisted dying may become an option. In only three jurisdictions is the age limit below eighteen years. In the Netherlands, a patient over twelve years of age can currently request assisted dying. And provided the patient is of mature judgement and adheres to the procedural requirements a patient of any age can request assisted dying in Belgium. While in Colombia, minors from the age of six years can request assisted dying, following a successful appeal to the Constitutional Court. This raises the question 'Why the right to die is afforded to those under the age of eighteen in only three jurisdictions?' and 'Might other jurisdictions follow suit in the legalising of assisted dying for minors?'