

Mobile death squads to kill sick and elderly in their own homes leads to surge in suicide rates in the Netherlands

- Around 3 per cent of all deaths in the Netherlands are now by euthanasia
- The country last year introduced mobile euthanasia units
- In 2002 it became the first country since Nazi Germany to legalise it

By [Daily Mail Reporter](#)

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One in 30 deaths in Holland are now from euthanasia, it has been revealed.

It comes after the Dutch government allowed mobile death squads to kill sick and elderly people in their own homes.

Official figures released yesterday, showed that euthanasia deaths soared by 13 per cent in 2012 compared to the previous year.

There were 4,188 deaths by euthanasia last year – accounting for three per cent of all deaths - compared to 3,695 deaths by euthanasia in 2011.



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One way trip: Euthanasia in the Netherlands is carried out by a doctor administering a strong sedative to put the patient in a coma, followed by a drug to stop breathing and cause death

It marks the sixth consecutive year that deaths by euthanasia have increased in the Netherlands.

The government has said that the reasons for the increase in euthanasia deaths cannot be determined with certainty.

Leading theories include a growing awareness and acceptance of the practice among both Dutch doctors and patients.

In March last year, however, Holland launched the world's first mobile death squads to be dispatched in cases when family doctors refused to administer lethal drugs on 'ethical' grounds.

The six units, comprising of at least a doctors and a nurse, were expected to send the number of euthanasia cases in Holland rocketing, with pro-euthanasia campaigners saying they would end the lives of an additional 1,000 'borderline' patients a year.

Anti-euthanasia activists in Britain said yesterday the year-on-year increases in euthanasia death proved argument that euthanasia was a 'slippery slope'.

Elsbeth Chowdharay-Best, the honorary secretary of Alert, said: 'It is what we expected and I do hope that people will pay more attention now to the warnings that have been made about introducing euthanasia to this country.

'The Dutch experience shows that euthanasia becomes routine,' she added. 'It traps more and more people into thinking they ought to leave this world prematurely.

'In that kind of culture euthanasia becomes expected and inevitable and everything else – such as good palliative care and a functional hospice movement – is gradually portrayed as rather selfish.'

Nikki Kenward of Distant Voices, a disability rights group, said: 'These numbers fill me with fear and horror.

'We are failing to see the dangers,' said Mrs Kenward who has been confined to a wheelchair since an attack of Guillian-Barre syndrome in the early 1990s.



The Dignitas building in Pfaeffikon near Zurich: Under Swiss law only 'assisted suicide' is permitted - which means that patients must take an active role in administering the drug that ends their lives

'Anyone who believes these figures to be necessary or acceptable should look to the future and be wary of the moment when the death doctor calls at their house uninvited – when the safeguards, score-sheets and so-called sentimentality have given way to a new world where age, infirmity and “useless” lives are seen as unnecessary and people like me are targeted once again.'

Holland became the first country in the world since Nazi Germany to legalise euthanasia when in 2002 it approved doctor-administered lethal drugs for terminally ill people facing unbearable suffering.

For several years, the reported number of cases declined, but since 2006 – when there were 1,923 deaths by euthanasia - they have risen steadily.

Most cases involve cancer patients but increasingly that have included dementia sufferers and even psychiatric patients.

In 2005 the Groningen Protocol protected doctors from being prosecuted for the euthanasia of infants as long as they followed approved guidelines.

Euthanasia is carried out by administering a strong sedative to put the patient in a coma, followed by a drug to stop breathing and cause death.

The Dutch government has insisted that 'the greatest care' is taken to offer euthanasia only to patients 'who are suffering unbearably with no prospect of improvement'.

Holland is following a pattern of incremental euthanasia deaths wherever the practice has been legalised.

Last year, Belgium, where euthanasia came into force in 2003, saw a 25 per cent increase in the number of

euthanasia deaths, leaping from 1,133 in 2011 to 1,432, a figure representing about two per cent of all deaths in the country.

A similar pattern is emerging in those countries where physician-assisted suicide has been legalised. In Washington State in the U.S., physician-assisted suicide deaths increased by 17 per cent in 2012 to 83 cases, up from 70 in 2011.

Again there were incremental rises of 51 in 2010 and 36 in 2009, when the state's Death With Dignity Act took effect.

In the neighbouring State of Oregon, the first U.S.-state to legalise assisted suicide, deaths at the hands of doctors are also at an all-time high. There were 59 assisted suicide deaths in Oregon in 2009, 65 in 2010, 71 in 2011 and 77 in 2012 - a 30 per cent increase overall in just four years. Overall, assisted suicides have shot up by 381 per cent from 16 in 1998, when the practice was legalised. Switzerland, which first relaxed prohibitions on assisted suicide in 1942, has seen a 700 per cent increase deaths in the same period.

Authorities recorded a steady rise of assisted suicides of Swiss nationals from 43 in 1998 to 297 in 2009. The figures do not include people from abroad who travel to Dignitas to commit suicide there.