

## Belgium to allow euthanasia for children

16th February, 2014



Lawmakers in Belgium have passed a bill that will allow euthanasia for terminally ill children. The bill was passed with 86 votes for the motion, 44

against, and 12 abstentions. It becomes the first nation to allow euthanasia for children. Belgium's controversial law applies only to terminally ill children who are in great pain. There are several conditions that must be met for any act of euthanasia to take place. The child must be in full possession of his/her mental skills and request the act themselves. It requires an adult's consent and the written approval of a medical team, who must submit a psychological report. In addition, there must be no treatment available that would alleviate the child's suffering and distress.

The law has created a storm of opposition worldwide. Opponents called it immoral and said children were not mature enough to make such a decision. One man present at the vote stood up and screamed "murderers" at the lawmakers. The Christian Science Monitor makes the case that: "In the 21st century, when parents the world over worry that children are growing up too quickly, Belgium is poised to hand kids one more responsibility." It adds that: "Allowing children, who aren't even old enough to drive or vote, to decide when it's time to die is one step too far." Last week, 160 Belgian paediatricians claimed the law was unnecessary because modern medicine could alleviate pain.

Sources: BBC / Christian Science Monitor / Flanders Times

### Writing

*Euthanasia should never be allowed for anyone.* Discuss.

### Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

*lawmakers / terminally ill / votes / controversial / mental skills / consent / distress / opposition / immoral / growing up / too quickly / responsibility / one step too far*

### True / False

- The voting that passed the bill was very close. T / F
- Belgium is the first country to allow euthanasia for children. T / F
- Children who wish to die need their parents' approval. T / F
- A child can be granted euthanasia even if there are drugs to help them. T / F
- A man accused lawmakers who passed the bill of being murderers. T / F
- A newspaper said it was too much of a responsibility for a child. T / F
- The newspaper said kids should be allowed to vote at a younger age. T / F
- Many doctors said modern medicine made euthanasia unnecessary. T / F

### Synonym Match

- |                   |                      |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| 1. lawmakers      | a. ease              |
| 2. motion         | b. ask for           |
| 3. controversial  | c. argument          |
| 4. request        | d. proposal          |
| 5. alleviate      | e. adult             |
| 6. opposition     | f. children's doctor |
| 7. mature         | g. legislators       |
| 8. case           | h. give              |
| 9. hand           | i. objection         |
| 10. paediatrician | j. emotive           |

### Discussion – Student A

- Is euthanasia immoral?
- Is it too much responsibility for a child to choose euthanasia?
- Does a family member or a doctor have the right to turn off a life support machine?
- What does your religion say about euthanasia?
- The Ancient Greek meaning for euthanasia is 'good death'. What do you think of this meaning?
- Is there a difference between euthanasia and murder?
- Is it crazy that a child not old enough to drive can choose to end his/her life?
- What questions would you like to ask one of the Belgian lawmakers?

## Phrase Match

- |   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| 1. 86 votes for the motion, 44 against, | a. enough                  |
| 2. several conditions that              | b. report                  |
| 3. be in full possession of             | c. too far                 |
| 4. submit a psychological               | d. must be met             |
| 5. alleviate the child's                | e. one more responsibility |
| 6. The law has created a storm          | f. his/her mental skills   |
| 7. children were not mature             | g. and 12 abstentions      |
| 8. children are growing up too          | h. of opposition           |
| 9. poised to hand kids                  | i. suffering and distress  |
| 10. one step                            | j. quickly                 |

## Discussion – Student B

- What do you think of Belgium's new law?
- Do you think more countries will follow suit?
- What do you understand by the terms 'mercy killing' and 'assisted suicide'?
- Are the conditions strict enough?
- Do people have the right to choose when to die?
- What are the arguments for and against euthanasia?
- Is euthanasia a compassionate way for the dying to die?
- Could euthanasia ever be allowed in your country?

## Spelling

- euthanasia for nrtmyaleli ill children
- 44 against, and 12 tssenatnboi
- Belgium's ecrriovatlosn law
- in full nosesispos of his/her mental skills
- submit a plygicalocsoh report
- the child's fngfuresi and distress
- created a storm of osoitonipp
- Opponents called it ramimol
- not tuamre enough to make such a decision
- screamed "rermersud" at the lawmakers
- Belgium is poesdi to hand kids one more
- modern medicine could laevatlei pain

### Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. c	3. j	4. b	5. a
6. i	7. e	8. c	9. h	10. f

## Role Play

### Role A – Pass exams

You think passing exams is a child's biggest responsibility. Tell the others 3 reasons why. Tell them why their ideas are wrong. Also, tell the others which of these children are least responsible for (and why): having fun, looking after parents in their old age or protecting the environment.

### Role B – Have fun

You think having fun is a child's biggest responsibility. Tell the others 3 reasons why. Tell them why their ideas are wrong. Also, tell the others which of these children are least responsible for (and why): passing exams, looking after parents in their old age or protecting the environment.

### Role C – Look after parents in their old age

You think looking after parents in their old age is a child's biggest responsibility. Tell the others 3 reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their ideas. Also, tell the others which of these children are least responsible for (and why): having fun, passing exams or protecting the environment.

### Role D – Protect the environment

You think protecting the environment is a child's biggest responsibility. Tell the others 3 reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their ideas. Also, tell the others which of these children are least responsible for (and why): having fun, looking after parents in their old age or passing exams.

## Speaking – Responsibilities

What are children's biggest responsibilities? Rank these with your partner. Put the biggest at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- |                     |                              |
|---------------------|------------------------------|
| • to pass exams     | • to help people in need     |
| • to have fun       | • to protect the environment |
| • to follow rules   | • to look after old parents  |
| • to get a good job | • to pass on their culture   |

### Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	T	d	F	e	T	f	T	g	F	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.