



President of Belgian health insurance company promotes euthanasia as solution for aging population

Description

WORLD : The president of Belgium's largest health care fund has promoted euthanasia as a solution for the country's aging population problem.

Luc Van Gorp, head of Christian Mutuality (CM), pointed out that the number of people over 80 in Belgium will double up to 1.2 million by 2050, putting large financial pressure on the health care system and insurance companies.

According to De Specialist, Van Gorp said the problem cannot be solved with more money and called for "a radically different approach."

"Doctors and other health professionals are now doing their utmost to make everyone live longer, but for what purpose? Living longer is not an end in itself, is it? It must first of all be about the question: how long can I live with quality [of life]."

"What about the category of older people who receive maximum care, but who still do not have the quality of life they want? That question is asked far too little," he stated.

Van Gorp said that in addition to the current euthanasia law, there "should also be a softer form for people who feel that their lives are complete," adding that "Many elderly people are tired of life."

Instead of calling the process suicide, which has negative connotations, he "would rather call it: giving life back."

"I know it is sensitive, but we really have to dare to have that debate."

Van Gorp further asserted that the cost of caring for people – human beings whose lives have intrinsic, God-given value regardless of any suffering – towards the end of their life may not be worthwhile, citing “expensive medication” for cancer patients.

In a telling remark, the executive used the metaphor of a “mountain of meat” that begins to smell to describe elderly citizens.

“I sometimes compare the aging people with a mountain of meat,” he said. “That mountain first ends up in healthcare. Doctors and hospitals get to work on this and make good money from it. But as soon as that meat starts to smell, they pass it on to elderly care. But aging is not only the responsibility of the people who work in elderly care.”

While several left-wing and liberal politicians are sympathetic to Van Gorp’s ideas, according to VRT NWS, Christian Democrat leader Sammy Mahdi opposed the plans, saying, “If someone is tired of life and feels like they are standing in the way and no longer getting visitors, then we are failing as a society.”

Van Gorp reiterated his ideas in an interview with the newspaper DeMorgen, in which he stated:

The demand for care will only increase in the coming years. If we just keep doing the way we are doing today, we’re going for an outright care crash. We can only prevent this if we choose a radically different approach, from a healthy society that puts quality of life first instead of quantity.

“Numerous healthcare providers have long indicated that it cannot continue in this way,” he said. “There are simply not enough professional hands left to provide all care. And as a society, we create too little space to take care of those who are most dear to us.”

In 2002, Belgium was the second country in the post-World War II era that legalized euthanasia. In 2014, it became the first country to abolish the age restriction on euthanasia.

It currently allows euthanasia for minors who suffer from a supposedly “terminal” disease, are allegedly close to death, or suffer from chronic pain and have the consent of parents and doctors.

In 2018, a government report revealed that three minors received lethal injections between 2016 and 2017.

The number of legal yearly euthanasia cases has been steadily on the rise since its legalization in 2002, reaching almost 3,000 cases in 2022.

BY Andreas Wailzer

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1. Disasters-Crisis-Depopulation-Genocide
2. Main
3. NWO-Deep State-Dictatorship-Tyranny

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