



Dear Members of RTDE,

We have had confirmed an opportunity to present our aims in the European Parliament on Thursday 12 October 2017, & we have also been able to find a venue to hold our two-yearly meeting, which was postponed from June 2017 in Torino.

Fortunately, Professor Dr. Wim Distelmans has invited us to hold our RTDE meeting in the “Centre of Expertise on the Worthy End of Life”, in Wemmel, on the Northern outskirts of Brussels.

Professor Distelmans founded this centre, which is unique in the world, in close collaboration with the Free University of Brussels.

Later, we will tell you more about the complex ins & outs of the European Parliament & the Wemmel Centre. See: [www.waardiglevenseinde.eu](http://www.waardiglevenseinde.eu). Unfortunately, this is in Dutch only [but try Google translate]. For now, please mark the days around Thursday 12 October 2017 in your diary.

Around noon we will meet you at the Centre in Wemmel on Wednesday, the next day we have our presentation in the Euro Parliament after this event we go back to Wemmel for continuing our agenda. The final program will reach you as soon as possible.

You may be interested to know that your RTDE President, Dr Aycke Smook, has been invited to stand for election to the Vice-Chair of the Human Rights Committee of the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe (CoE).



Unfortunately, progress of RTDE in the Council of Europe is slow, & sometimes it is like an Echternach procession, three steps forward & two steps backwards.

However, if the citizens of Europe really are in favour of a right to a dignified death at the time of their choice, ultimately they will succeed. Inevitably, our opponents will surrender because they become more & more unbelievable.

It is clear that, in thinking about end of life options, citizens in most European countries are far ahead of their

politicians, church hierarchy, & medical associations.

Each one of these particular groups has its own views & interpretations of the matter. However, in essence, to date, the clear majority wish of the people is massively disregarded. Moreover, when the majority wish is sometimes recognised, it is usually neglected.

Sadly, without sufficient input from our Member Societies, the RTDE Board cannot be aware of all our Member Societies' needs, & is unable to intervene as may be necessary.

Because of this absence of communication, the RTDE Board are unaware of all the difficulties Member Societies may meet in their fight for end of life options & a decent right-to-die in their country.

As the RTDE Board, we work hard, despite a continuing lack of response to our invitations to supply us with information about Member Societies' local situations. This is the very information that we could forward to the Council of Europe at the INGO Conferences in Strasbourg twice a year.

Gradually, RTDE get more & more attention from other INGO's in Strasbourg. Nevertheless, it will take much more time & energy before we are truly heard, & seen to be representing a basic human right.

Therefore, we ask you all, yet again, to contact the representatives of your country at the Council of Europe (CoE). Please let them know that you, your RTD Society, & RTDE exist. Please give us the names & addresses of your CoE representatives so we are able to contact them.

It is frustrating that RTDE receives so little active help & support from our Member Societies. However, I am not Don Quixote. I have worked for the WFRTDS & for RTDE for a very long time. It has cost me much in time, energy, & money, but I have found it very worthwhile. This is not only for the people in my own country, who already have the opportunity to ask for a legal, dignified death at the end of life, but also for the many equivalent vulnerable people elsewhere.

In my view, it is useless to continue to fight windmills, as Don Quixote de la Mancha tried to do with his Sancho Panza. Moreover, just like Don Quixote, who did not get his unpredictable Dulcinea del Toboso, if we do not really fight together, we will never realize our goal, the freedom of choice at the end of life, & a dignified death.

It is still amazing to me that so many politicians feel unable to offer & provide to their citizens a decent death by medical aid in dying!

Canadians, on the other hand, fortunately now have legal "medical aid in dying" (MAID). It began in Quebec, with the Belgian legalisation situation being taken as a model. Perhaps the word "euthanasia" seems too provocative.

Recently, we were invited to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the Belgian Euthanasia Law. The event was in

Brussels on 11 May 2017 in the House of the Belgian Federal Parliament. Jet & I represented RTDE.

May I remind you once more, why we started RTDE?

**Right to Die Europe (RTDE)**, founded in 1993 under the umbrella of the WFRTDS, seeks to coordinate & support European Societies dealing with end-of-life situations. These can consist of euthanasia, medical help in dying, assisted suicide, or promoting a living will. In a living will, a person is able to write her /his wishes about medical treatment & a wish for a dignified death.

As laws differ, each RTD society has to act according to the situation in their own country. Unfortunately, It is not possible elsewhere to copy, one-to-one, the situations prevailing in Switzerland & the Benelux Nations.

What are the ambitions, aims, or targets of RTDE?

1. To seek acceptance & legalisation of voluntary euthanasia, assisted suicide, or at least medical help in dying.
2. To encourage discussion on ending life in dignity.
3. To campaign for the legal acceptance of the living will, advance directives, & advance decisions.
4. To seek social acceptance & legal recognition in Europe of self-determination to guarantee a dignified death.
5. To support initiatives towards setting-up Right to Die Societies.
6. To strengthen the ties between existing Sister European Right to Die Societies.
7. To make every effort to be represented at appropriate International, European, & National organisations.
8. To oppose those who wish to deny self-determination at the end-of-life.
9. To promote our view at the twice yearly meetings of the Conference of INGOs at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. (RTDE was acknowledged as an INGO with participatory status in 2013.)

Make the best of it!

Yours truly,

Aycke Smook MD

President Right to Die Europe.



