



**German Society for Dying with Dignity
(Deutsche Gesellschaft für Humanes Sterben e. V.)**

Press kit





To catch a glimpse on the DGHS

Name:	German Society on Dying with Dignity
Foundation:	11 / 7 / 1980
Head office:	DGHS-office Kronenstraße 4 10117 Berlin Germany Phone: 0049 (0) 30 / 21 22 23 37 - 0 Fax: 0049 (0) 30 / 21 22 23 37 - 77 Mai: info@dghs.de Internet: www.dghs.de www.facebook.com/DGHSde
President	Elke Baezner
Managing director/ Chief editor:	Claudia Wiedenmann M. A. The society's journal: Humanes Leben – Humanes Sterben
Public relations:	Wega Wetzel M. A. (press spokeswoman, acting Chief-editor) Katja Winckler M. A. (press assistant)
Tasks:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organization on civil rights and patient's protection • enforcing one's living will • realizing a human dying with dignity • preserving one's human rights till his / her death • introduction to a reasonable change of law • education and information • publicizing deficits • scientific research
Members:	around 26.000, in addition to that many sponsors
(Choice of) membership supply:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enforcement of one's living will by lawyer on court if necessary • experience and expertise for decades • individual help for one's old age • 24-hour-access to living will per internet (emergency certificate) • Journal „Humanes Leben – Humanes Sterben“ (HLS) • Information centre on hospice work as well as on advice on pain therapists, palliative stations and geographically close hospices • academy for terminal care • lectures and discussion groups
Annual subscription:	50 Euro, couples or civil union each person for 45 Euro

(State of the art: July 2013)



Portrait of the DGHS

The German Society for Dying with Dignity (DGHS) is an organization concerning with patient protection. It comprehends itself as part of the civil rights movement campaigning also for human rights.

Since being found in 1980 the DGHS feels constrained to one's lifelong right of self-determination. It's committed to keeping a human being's dignity and to avoid an unbearable and mindless suffering.

As first organization on patient protection working nationwide the DGHS offers a wide range of support: living wills (advance declarations to enable everyone to refuse unwanted life-prolonging treatment), care regulations as well as power of authority as prevention for undesirable therapy. It also offers advice on organ donation. In that way the DGHS makes allowance to the patient's individual wish for a broad protection. Everyone is able to decide individually and mandatory on the possible appliance of preservative measures.

In 1999 the DGHS set up a Federal Center of patient's protection. As well as members and non-members are able to deposit their living wills there. In addition the DGHS' Academy on terminal care (AfS) clears up on topics like illness, dying, death and sepulture. The information centre on hospice as well as the call center on pain therapy give advice on hospices, palliative care and pain therapists.

It also works for human conditions in senior residences and for a better doctoral education referring to the handling of the elderly. Finally the DGHS speaks for pain reducing institutions being installed area-wide and for adequate rewards for talks with the dying people.

The DGHS' democratic form of organization is the society. It stands up for each member personally. In case of emergency it arranges a lawyer to get someone's rights accepted on court.



Basic programme of the German Association for Dying with Dignity (DGHS), registered association

Principles

- A. According to Art. 1 of the German Basic Law (“Grundgesetz”) the dignity of man is inviolable. However, this dignity can only be stipulated personally by each individual. Therefore, self-determination is an essential basic right of a human being. The DGHS advocates the recognition of and compliance with this right to self-determination until the last breath is drawn.
- B. No obligation to live may be derived from the right to live. Religious commands may not be a benchmark for state laws. This also applies to the organisation of one’s personal life right until death.
- C. Therefore, the individual citizen must remain at liberty to shorten his own life in order to avoid a degradation felt by him. For this purpose expert assistance must, if necessary, also be possible as a last way-out.
- D. As an organisation to protect patients the DGHS campaigns against patronisation in the handling of sick and dying persons and deplorable conditions in the health system. The mental and physical wellbeing of the patient must have precedence over financial considerations.

Objectives

In our society we must once again remind ourselves of the inevitable end of all human life. The DGHS wants to induce people to occupy themselves with dying in plenty of time.

- It is the aim of the DGHS to objectivise the subject of euthanasia.

- It is the aim of the DGHS to realise the wishes of the broad majority of the population for the possibility of suicide accompanied by doctors. This way the number of often cruel degrading suicides out of despair is also reduced. The failed suicides, which frequently lead to serious physical and mental damages can also be reduced. In order to achieve this, the DGHS proposed the Suicide Prevention Act (SPG) to the parties represented in the Lower House of German Parliament (“Bundestag”) in 2012.

- It is the aim of the DGHS to influence politics, the health system and the doctors’ association in order to assert the basic demand of the DGHS for a self-determined and humane end to life.



The 10 demands of the DGHS

1. The DGHS demands the implementation of the right to self-determination.
2. The DGHS demands the compliance with the Patients' Living Will Act.
3. The DGHS demands that deplorable conditions in the handling of sick and dying persons are subjected to tighter controls, made public and remedied immediately.
4. The DGHS requests the state and society to show more commitment to asserting the rights of dying and, disabled persons and persons injured in accidents.
5. The DGHS demands that people, who can no longer bring their condition of suffering into line with their personal feeling of values have the right to be able to shorten their process of suffering and dying at their own responsibility and with a good conscience without being patronised by outsiders or moral assignments of fault.
6. The DGHS demands the help of a doctor or specialist qualified helper in order to enable a sanction-free self-determined passing.
7. The DGHS demands
 - an extensive suicide prophylaxis by a qualified counsel of persons willing to die with open results and neutral values.
 - the option for advice by a doctor and for action of an assisted suicide in the event of serious incurable illness.
 - a strict regulation of the assisted suicide analogue to Switzerland and several federal states of the USA.
8. The DGHS demands improved training of doctors and nursing staff in the handling of and with the communication especially with people at the end of their lives.
9. The DGHS demands that specialist qualified euthanasia should be permitted both in state as well as in private facilities.
10. Against the background of the demographic development the DGHS demands a scientific research of suicides and attempts at suicide due to old age and illness as well as the costs to society caused thereby.

Overview on DGHS Service from A-Z

- A** Academy foundation for terminal care (“Akademie-Stiftung für Sterbebegleitung”)
advise (personal or per telephone) concerning prevention in case of disease
academic advising board (among other things advice, symposia, panel discussions)
- B**
- C** commitment for a broad legal regulation of terminal care and terminal help; legal propositions
commitment for a regulation for assisted suicide and active direct suicide in Germany
certificate of organ donation
case of emergency sticker (German and English)
- D** discussion groups (nationwide)
- E** emergency pass (available worldwide per internet)
events: organizing own events and participating at other’s
- F** financial help in case of emergence (i. e. expenses for the patient’s authorized agent)
foreign countries:
→ tight contact and exchange with affiliated companies on an international level
→ participates at international congresses
- G** guideline support for people suffering from limited mobility
- H** home visit (in particular cases)
help by getting accepted one’s living will deposited by the DGHS
- I** information on hospices
information on care law
information on current law
- J** journalist information: We are happy to provide interested journalists with detailed background information.
- K**
- L** letter of patient’s protection for life preservative therapy
lobbying for the right of self-determination to the point of legislative procedure
legal aid for accomplishment of the patient’s protection letter and supplements in order to the requirements of the DGHS’ general assembly and the DGHS’ executive committee
living will referring to questions on organ transplantation



- M** **Media Award:** each year the DGHS awards the Arthur-Koestler-prize to print articles, Radio and TV programmes referring to the DGHS' subjects.
- N** **National Centre of Patient Protection:** enables members and non-members to deposit their living wills for free (however without legal protection).
- O** organization's journal "Humanes Leben – Humanes Sterben" (HLS), available in hard copy or per internet with aid to orientation, is released quarterly
- P** **Public Education** on topics concerning DGHS' targets especially on conceptual and legal questions, on organ donation, thanatology and special cases on dying. In addition to that the DGHS organizes information desks, attends at health fairs and self-help groups.
public relations for information and education open to all citizens and participating occupational groups
personal advise in case of conflict and grief
patient protection folder with living will and additional securities (act of disposals are available in different languages)
press relations
publications (as well as in the internet and in journals)
psychological supervision and accompaniment of dying people through regional volunteers (based on specific case)
- Q**
- R** **references** for a shortening of an agonizing dying process (ultima ratio)
readng service for visually handicapped members
- S** **suicide's** act of disposal (also help for investigating authorities)
support completing the "patient's protection letter"
service in the internet on www.dghs.de and www.humanesleben-humanesterben.de
statements to legal propositions and concepts
- T** **telephone** service anticipating unrecognized dying
telephone service on pain therapy being nationally available
- U**
V
W
X
Y
Z

(State of the art: July 2013. This overview does make no claim to be complete.)



The DGHS and its faces

Executive board

Elke Baezner	president
Adi Meister	vice-president
Prof. Dr. Dr. Dieter Birnbacher	vice-president
Peter Görlich	treasurer
Dr. med. Ulrich Meyberg	assessor
Rudi Krebsbach	assessor
Volker Leisten	assessor

Managing director

Claudia Wiedenmann M. A.

Academic advisory board

Prof. Dr. ret. Dieter Birnbacher, philosopher
Formerly: Institute for philosophy, Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf / Germany

Elke Baezner – president of DGHS

Prof. Dr. ret. Wolfgang van den Daele, sociologist
Formerly: Free University Berlin / Germany

Prof. Dr. ret. Klaus Feldmann, sociologist
Formerly: University Hannover / Germany

Prof. Dr. Dr. Eric Hilgendorf, professor a. o. t. law
Julius-Maximilian-University Würzburg / Germany

Prof. Dr. Christian Reimer, Bad Nauheim

Dr. med. Michael de Ridder, doctor
Chief of a Hospice of Vivantes clinic centre Berlin / Germany

Prof. Dr. med. Bettina Schöne-Seifert, philosopher
Institut for ethics and theory of Medicine, University Münster / Germany
(member of German Ethic Committee)

Claudia Wiedenmann M. A. – managing director of DGHS

(State of the art: July 2013)



Brief profile: Elke Baezner, president of the DGHS

Since November 2008 Elke Baezner is president of the German Society of Dying with Dignity (DGHS) e. V.

After studying German philology and Romanistics in Heidelberg and Mannheim she worked as a teacher for grammar school pupils and after that in adult education.

She has brought great experience to her position. It is because she has got involved in swiss institutions on human dying for more than twenty years. Elke Baezner who has got the german and the swiss nationality was a board member of EXIT ADMD Swiss Romande and president of EXIT Deutsche Schweiz before she decided to support the DGHS.

In addition to that she required international experiences in the European Society “Right-to-Die” where she has been president for three years.

Elke Baezner resumes her presidency’s targets for in one sentence: “We need to create conditions in Germany that make sure that one’s human dignity will be safed till his life ends.”

She demands an extensive legal regulation that respects the right of self-determination and the patient’s will. Thereby it creates the basic conditions for a human dying. These basic conditions inhance the living will as well as financial security for palliative care and the doctor’s education in pain therapy. As organization dealing with patient’s protection the DGHS applies especially for the right to be free of choice considering all options at one life’s end.

The DGHS’ president explains: “The right of self-determination is a human right. It is not restricted to one’s lifetime but includes one’s dying process as well.”

In addition to the president the DGHS’ executive board includes two vice presidents, a treasurer and to the extend of three assessors. The executive committee is elected by the general assembly which is the society’s supreme body. The regular mandate includes four years.

(State of the art: July 2013)



Chronicle of DGHS

- 1976** action group for dying with dignity has been established as part of the “Bund für Geistesfreiheit”, Nürnberg.
- 1980** 7th November: Foundation of German Society for Dying with Dignity e. V. (DGHS) in Nürnberg.
- 1981** 25th May: first general assembly in Munich.
9th September: presentation of an own living will.
Academic advisory board has been established.
First release of the DGHS’ society journal “Humanes Leben – Humanes Sterben”.
- 1982** August: DGHS participates at the World Federation of Right to Die Society’s Congress (Melbourne)
November: Second general assembly in Munich; introduction of the system of delegates that is still valid.
- 1984** publication “Sterben zu Hause” (out of stock).
12th April: Hermy Eckert (member of the DGHS) who was badly suffering from cancer and deformed commits suicide (case “Hackethal”); in a survey 75 per cent of the German population agree with a possibility to a self-determined suicide in terms of Hermy Eckert.
21st November: Generaly Assemply approves the “Frankfurter Thesen zum humanen Sterben”.
- 1985** Hearing of the DGHS by the German Parliament’s egal committee
November: European Congress for Human dying in Frankfurt on the occasion of the DGHS’ 5th birthday; lecture by heart surgeon Prof. Dr. med. Christiaan Barnard (†).
- 1986** September: Proposals by the DGHS to humanize the dying process by a changing law (§§ 216a, 226a, 226b and 323c StGB, “Strafgesetzbuch”).
- 1987** publication “Sterbebegleitung” is out of stock.
First representative opinion poll on the acceptance of euthanasia in the population followed by many more. Others covering similar topics as i.e. the right of mandating on one’s own life (2001) follow.
- 1989** 8th July: Foundation of an own regional office and the academy of terminal care (AfS); more regional offices and contact points will follow.
- 1991** development of a patient’s protection letter (“Patientenschutzbrief”, PSB) being adapted to the law of supervision that came into force at the 1st January 1992.
- 1992** Letter to all members of the German reunificational constitution commission proposing the approval of a right on dying with dignity as constitution’s target. Great response by highly ranked politicians.

- 1994** The DGHS developed a certificate for organ donation.
- 1996** The DGHS' "living will on matters referring to organ extraction" offers differentiated possibilities to handle organ donation individually.
- 1997** The DGHS presents her legal political guiding principles and proposals for a legal regulation of terminal care and euthanasia to the public.
- 1999** Again the DGHS verbalizes a petition to regulate terminal care and euthanasia.
 19th January: The German Parliament decides to make aware the parliamentary groups to the DGHS' petition.
 July: Foundation of the "Bundeszentrale für Patientenschutz" (BPS) that offers a free option to deposit one's patient's protection letter (for all citizens).
- 2000** 26th April: Enacting of position paper on suicide prophylaxis. The DGHS argues for criteria on accuracy and law being geared to constitution.
 July: Patient's protection letter for life-saving therapy.
- 2001** First "week for the right of self-determination" (analogically to the churchly "weeks for the life").
 The DGHS sets up an award named by journalist Arthur Koestler that will be granted to journalistic or literary publications on self-determined dying.
 October: The DGHS supports the initiative on "Mehr Demokratie e. V."
- 2002** 21st January and autumn: The DGHS provides a improved patient's protection folder to be adjusted to legal changes in the future.
 DGHS-statement on the investigation commission's hearing on "dying people's care".
 18th February: Congress on "Bewaring human's dignity in borderline situations" in Thüringen's Landtag, Erfurt.
 20th March: The DHGS hands in its petition at the EU Parliament.
 The film award "Die Lebensuhr" is donated for the first time. From now on it will be awarded periodically.
 December: The DGHS asks the German Parliament to give attention to the topic "struggle against deficits in care"; around 20 organizations and personalities sign this document.
- 2003** The DGHS' journal "Humanes Leben – Humanes Sterben" (HLS) receives a new better manageable size starting with version HLS 2003-1.
- 2004** Publication of "legal guidelines on patient's protection mandates and euthanasia" (HLS 2004-2).
- 2004** 13th/14th November: The general assembly decides new statutes and the establishment of an academy foundation for terminal care (ASfS).
- 2005** January: Statement of DGHS referring an outline by the Ministry of Justice to a change of the law on care (legal fixing of the patient's mandate).
- 2006** September: the DGHS participates at the German Jurist's Congress in Stuttgart.
 HLS 2006-3 presents the newly developed emergency pass for the first time. It enables everyone to a 24-hours-access per internet.

- 2008** April: Relaunch of the DGHS-Website www.dghs.de that concludes extended service features for members.
The DGHS presents its newly developed mandate in case of dementia.
15th and 16th November: The general assembly votes Elke Baezner as new president. In addition to that it agrees upon the position paper “For responsible and tolerant ethics on dying – against rapid suicide, against failed aid by the lawgiver”.
- 2009** In spring the DGHS publishes an “open letter” in several print media products. It accounted for the successful realization of the patient’s mandate law.
Since 1st September the law of the living will has become effective. From now on everyone’s living will is mandatory for all participating parties. The DGHS has continued offering aid to her members by putting through their living wills.
From October further construction of the DGHS-office Berlin. The engagement in the capital needs to have more support.
- 2010** 25th June: A leading BGH-decision (“Grundsatzurteil des Bundesgerichtshofs”) confirms the priority of the right of self-determination as constitutional law – in accordance to the DGHS-positions since 1981.
7th November: 30th birthday of the DGHS.
- 2011** The new map for patient’s protection („Patientenschutz- und Vorsorgemappe“) is published.
1st December: The office moves from Augsburg to Berlin
- 2012** Statements to the Patients’ rights law and to the draft law of § 217 StGB (“Strafgesetzbuch”), who wants to forbid the commercially support of suicide (“gewerbliche Förderung der Selbsttötung”).
Spring: Relaunch of DGHS’ society magazine “Humanes Leben – Humanes Sterben”
10th /11th November: New Election of the presidency – Elke Baezner reelected as the president
11th November: Presentation of a law to prevent Suicides (“Suizid-Präventions-Gesetz”, SPG)

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