



Zurich-Forch, 18 March 2026

A note from DIGNITAS – To live with dignity – To die with dignity

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## **Review of the year 2025 and outlook for 2026**

### **Working towards good conditions for freedom of choice regarding the end of one’s own life – More countries and more complex medical conditions**

**In 2025, the long-standing legal commitment of the non-profit membership association “DIGNITAS – To live with dignity – To die with dignity” and the political activities for the human right to self-determination regarding one’s own end in life continued. In Switzerland, the association focussed on securing access to voluntary assisted dying for residents of residential homes. Internationally, the association has intensified exchanges and knowledge transfer with organisations and individuals who are committed to freedom of choice and self-determination at the end of life. The comprehensive advisory work for individuals seeking help and suicide attempt prevention remain at the core of DIGNITAS’ activities.**

“DIGNITAS – To live with dignity – To die with dignity” (abbreviated: “DIGNITAS”) is a non-profit membership association. Through its activities it empowers people to self-determinedly shape their life in regard of health and end of life and, moreover, to decide on the manner and time of their own end in life. This is especially significant in countries where such freedom does not yet exist. With open-outcome advisory work on suicide attempt prevention, advance directives, palliative care and voluntary assisted dying DIGNITAS offers its members, their families, and others who are interested the necessary basis for well-informed decision-making.

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## **Working towards good conditions for freedom of choice regarding the end of one's own life**

Self-determination in shaping one's own end in life should not depend on where someone lives. This is why DIGNITAS is campaigning for this "last human right" worldwide through legal and political work, providing information about end-of-life choices and making it possible for people from all over the world to exercise this right in a professional, legal and medically supported setting in Switzerland.

In 2025, assisted suicide was an important topic in Swiss politics. The first-time use of the "Sarco" in autumn 2024 led to various political initiatives at national level from opponents and critics of the current practice of physician-supported assisted suicide. It is important to have these discussions. They always provide an opportunity to address fears with facts and to maintain a sensible approach to assisted suicide. Assisted suicide is regulated sufficiently clearly in Switzerland. Each case is reported to the authorities and investigated, and the judiciary can intervene at any time.

In Switzerland, DIGNITAS continues to pay special attention to enabling and securing access to the option of professional assisted suicide for residents of old people's and nursing homes. In the Canton of Zurich, DIGNITAS is part of the initiative committee "Self-determination at the end of life, also in retirement and nursing homes"<sup>1</sup>. The cantonal initiative demands that seriously ill and suffering individuals who wish to make use of assisted suicide can do so in their place of residence, which could also be a retirement or nursing home, and that this right should also be enshrined in law.

At the international level, self-determination regarding one's own end in life is becoming an important issue in more and more countries – both in the public sphere and in politics. A growing number of organisations and individuals committed to freedom of choice and self-determination at the end of life in their own country are seeking contact with DIGNITAS. The association shares relevant experience and expertise gained from over 27 years of activity and engages in education and network building. In this way, it contributes to achieving its goal: no one should have to travel to Switzerland to exercise their right to decide on the manner and time of their own end in life.

The legal-political work of DIGNITAS (court judgments, reports, submissions, comments, etc) is documented at [www.dignitas.ch](http://www.dignitas.ch).

### **Advisory work, assistance and membership**

The prevention of suicide attempts is at the core of the comprehensive advisory work of DIGNITAS. Only by taking a person seriously in his or her desire to end their suffering and life for whatever reason, openly exploring all options and offering a real emergency exit and thus enabling an open-outcome conversation, is it possible to prevent a rise in the pressures resulting from hopelessness and despair which could otherwise lead someone to attempt a high-risk lonely suicide.

Every day DIGNITAS is contacted by dozens of people from all over the world. Free initial advice is also available to non-members. Individuals seeking help often lack the information they need to make decisions about different ways and options to improve their quality of life until its end. With open-outcome advisory work on suicide attempt prevention, advance directives, palliative care and assisted dying, DIGNITAS offers its members, their families and others who are interested the necessary basis for well-informed decision-making: assisted suicide is only one topic among others.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://selbstbestimmung-auch-im-heim.ch> (in German)

DIGNITAS finances its activities mostly through membership fees. As of the end of 2025, DIGNITAS counted 15,968 members<sup>2</sup>. Less than 3% of them make use of an accompanied suicide: 263 individuals in 2025<sup>3</sup>. The costs associated with preparing and carrying out a physician-supported assisted suicide – especially for non-Swiss residents – cannot always be fully borne by the members themselves. If need be, based on its statutes, DIGNITAS reduces or even completely waives fees on reasoned request. In 2025, DIGNITAS granted 103,451 Swiss Francs in reduction of fees.

### **More countries and more complex medical conditions**

In some countries assisted dying (i.e. assisted suicide, voluntary euthanasia, or both) is now legal – for example in Germany, Austria, Spain, the Benelux countries, Italy (partly), Australia, New Zealand, Colombia, Uruguay, and in over a dozen US states. In those countries, people suffering from an advanced incurable illness can usually make use of help locally and will not have to travel to Switzerland. In addition, access to palliative care has improved in some countries in recent years, which can significantly enhance the quality of life of those affected in their last period of life.

Nevertheless, there continue to be many requests for assisted dying and advice from individuals who, due to inadequate legislation, do not fulfil the eligibility criteria in their country for receiving access to medical help to end their life, as well as requests from countries where assisted dying is still prohibited. There has also been an increase in requests from individuals with complex medical conditions which severely impair their quality of life.

The examination of a request for assisted dying, the preparation of a robust medical dossier for assessment by a Swiss medical doctor (or more than one) and – if the member wishes to proceed and make use of an assisted suicide – the procurement and completion of the necessary papers and official documents require considerable time and specific know-how and involve a great deal of work, both on the part of the member and on the part of DIGNITAS<sup>4</sup>.

### **Further activities**

Today, in many countries considerably more importance is attached to self-determination in shaping the end of one's own life than in 1998, when DIGNITAS was founded. However, freedom of choice and the right to a self-determined end of one's own life are not always sufficiently taken into consideration by national laws, jurisdictions and health systems. DIGNITAS contributes to remedying this situation by providing information and advice to political decision-makers, public officials, private institutions, and the general public.

Submissions for legislative projects, participation in hearings, the preparation and support of court cases and political initiatives are also part of the association's international efforts. The association fosters exchange and know-how transfer with organisations in Switzerland and abroad which are committed to freedom of choice and self-determination at the end of one's own life. In 2025, DIGNITAS received delegations from Brazil, the USA and the UK, held presentations in the context of the assisted dying bill in the UK and gave various lectures in Switzerland, Austria and the UK.

Providing information for specialised articles, reports and documentaries is also part of this public engagement, just as much as responding to countless inquiries by school pupils, undergraduates, PhD

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<sup>2</sup> <https://dignitas.ch/en/association/statistics/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://dignitas.ch/en/association/statistics/>

<sup>4</sup> see also "[The path to an accompanied suicide](#)"

students, doctorates, researchers, journalists, and other interested parties. In October 2025, DIGNITAS launched a new website with improved navigation and structure. The quadrilingual DIGNITAS website is extensively used as a source of information by visitors from all over the world. This shows that having access to knowledge and options regarding freedom of choice and self-determination at the end of one's life is of high relevance internationally.

## Outlook for 2026

No one should have to make the journey to Switzerland to exercise their right to decide on the manner and time of their own end in life, and the association remains committed to this goal. From a liberal-progressive perspective, it is necessary to regulate in law only where it is actually necessary for the safe exercise of a right, and to ensure that laws do not restrict the very right they claim to grant.

Quality of life until the end, self-determination and real freedom of choice combined with individual responsibility and advance planning are values which are not available as a matter of course. In Switzerland too, where physician-supported assisted/accompanied suicide has been an established practice for more than 40 years now, it is essential to continue ensuring freedom of choice and creating the conditions for individuals to be able to decide for themselves about the end of their suffering and life and to be professionally advised, supported, and accompanied for this purpose.

In view of demographic developments, given the increasing importance of freedom of choice and self-determination until the end of life in societies worldwide and the very hesitant political processes regarding assisted dying in many countries, it can be assumed that the internationality and complexity of DIGNITAS' work will continue to increase in the coming years.

DIGNITAS founder Ludwig A. Minelli passed away on 29 November 2025 shortly before his 93rd birthday by voluntary assisted dying<sup>5</sup>. With the continuous growth of the association since its foundation in 1998, he had already expanded the association's board by several persons some years ago, planned succession for a seamless transition, and ensured the association's operational continuity. The DIGNITAS team will continue to manage and develop the association in the spirit of its founder as a professional and combative international organisation for self-determination and freedom of choice in life and at the end of life.

## Key figures at a glance

Date of foundation of the member association:	17 May 1998
Employees as of end of 2025:	37 (all part-time)
Members as of end of 2025:	15,968 (incl. DIGNITAS-Germany)
Physician-supported accompanied suicides in 2025:	263
Investment in international legal further development 2025:	CHF 87,535
Reduction and exemption of fees in 2025:	CHF 103,451
Minimum annual subscription:	CHF 80
Membership fee for an accompanied suicide:	CHF 2,500 (exception: reduction / exemption)
Donations and bequests in 2025:	CHF 103'306

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<sup>5</sup> see also "[Passing of a pioneer and warrior](#)"

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#### **BACKGROUND:**

**DIGNITAS – To live with dignity – To die with dignity** was founded in May 1998 with the aim, through international legal and political work, to make the proven Swiss model of freedom of choice, self-determination and personal responsibility in life and at life's end also accessible to individuals abroad.

DIGNITAS' advisory concept – combining palliative care, suicide attempt prevention, advance directives/decisions and assisted dying – offers a basis for good decision-making to shape life until the end.

Through litigation, DIGNITAS obtained a judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in 2011 acknowledging the right/freedom of a competent individual to decide on the manner and time of his or her own end in life and confirming this to be protected by Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

DIGNITAS has been engaged in many lawsuits in Europe and Canada and has provided in-depth submissions and received visits by expert and parliamentary committees from Great Britain, Australia, Canada, etc. when laws were discussed and planned for the protection of a patient's autonomy and human dignity.

The founder of the charitable DIGNITAS organisation is Ludwig A. Minelli (1932 - 2025), an attorney-at-law specialising in human rights. The DIGNITAS board is supported by 37 part-time employees and several external experts in the fields of medicine, law, IT, and auditing.