



# **Guide to the ASSOCIATION LIFE-END**

January 2023 E

# INTRODUCTION

The association Life-End (LE) is a Swiss organisation based near Basel offering assisted dying to members in particular circumstances. This enables them to die with dignity and comfort, despite having to travel to Switzerland to do so.

Swiss law, unlike other countries, allows a doctor under certain conditions to write a prescription for a lethal dose of a barbiturate. In order to comply with this law, various documents are required. Acquiring these and going through the procedures needed can take time and sometimes be difficult.

The goal of this guide is to help members complete the formalities, inform them about the time that may be needed, indicate the cost and describe the procedures when they reach Basel so that they know what to expect.

In some cases, arranging an assisted death can take several months, so it is wise to start the application process 3-4 months before your preferred date – or as early as possible. ES will do its best to speed up applications in urgent cases, but it is always better to have enough time when dealing with an assisted death.

# JOINING LIFECIRCLE

**The association lifecircle does not accept any new members since 1.11.2022.** This is because lifecircle wants to remain a small, mainly regional association. On the other hand, it was never the intention of the founder, Dr. Erika Preisig, to hold as many AVD's as possible for as long as possible. Rather, the main purpose of the Eternal Spirit Foundation and now of the Life-End Association was and will always be to promote the legalisation of AVD throughout the world. The goal is that one day people will no longer have to travel to Switzerland from abroad in order to be allowed to have an AVD.

Living wills, also for non-members of the association, as well as account details can also be downloaded directly from our website [www.lifecircle.ch](http://www.lifecircle.ch) and the completed living wills can be sent to us by post. Every member should have a valid living will. All forms of living wills are accepted and enforced for the person concerned. We can also be sent pre-existing living wills.

When you have sent the original of the living will to LC and paid your membership dues, you will receive a membership card which includes your membership number and an access code for your personal space in the intranet on our homepage. The membership card will serve as an invoice for the membership contribution.

## **Contact details:**

lifecircle/Life-End  
Fichtlirain 16  
CH-4105, Biel-Benken  
Switzerland  
[mail@lifecircle.ch](mailto:mail@lifecircle.ch)

## WHO CAN ASK FOR AN ASSISTED DEATH?

Even though Swiss law also accepts AVD in cases of healthy people, LE will not give AVD to a person that is not ill. Only if an unbearable suffering or an incurable illness exists, LE will give AVD. But no one will be forced to accept a treatment if this decision is well reflected. Especially very old people should have an easier access to AVD, as over the age of 85 it is more and more likely to suffer from an acute illness which leads to loss of mental capacity, but not to death. (cerebral haemorrhage, stroke, fall, infarction etc.)

You can ask for an assisted death if you are:

- a member of lifecircle
- of sound judgment
- incurably ill (main diagnosis) **or** have an unacceptably incapacitating disability **or** unbearable and uncontrollable pain.
- informed about possible treatment and alternatives
- not influenced by anyone
- wish to die of long duration and well reflected
- judged by an independent doctor
- have informed your family members

## HOW TO PROCEED

When you wish to ask for an assisted death, you must send LE a formal request, which includes the following:

### 1. A PERSONAL LETTER

(preferably typed, must be signed) in which you request that LE prepare an accompanied suicide for you and explain your circumstances – the reasons for your request, your medical condition and prognosis, and how all this affects your desire not to continue living. If you don't think you can afford the costs listed on page 14, please send your financial details on a separate sheet.

### 2. A BIOGRAPHICAL BRIEF DESCRIBING YOUR PERSONAL AND FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES

(preferably typed). This must include the views of your next of kin. Does your family support your intention? Will someone go to Basel with you– family members and/or a friend? (The help of LE does not depend on the family's agreement, but to avoid problems with family members they must be informed)

### 3. MEDICAL REPORTS

- One or more up-to-date medical reports (no older than 3 to 6 months)
- One older medical report with all diagnoses.
- The reports should include all diagnoses, present state of health, prognosis, treatment and current medication.

The application must **not jet** be accompanied by the preparation fee of CHF 3500. This fee is only due after you have received the “green light” for AVD. If you do never accomplish an AVD, only CHF 1000 will be refunded, as the doctor’s fees and other costs have to be paid in any case.

The complete request is transferred to a Swiss doctor. If he/she agrees that your condition justifies an assisted death and your documents are in order (see below), LE gives you the “provisional green light” and provides further information concerning your journey to Switzerland and your stay there.

## REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

Before you come to Switzerland, you must send the documents listed below. **Please note carefully the specific requirements for each certificate.**

### **In any case you must send:**

- Passport or identity card (photocopy only). You need to bring the original when you come.
- Identity card or passport (photocopy only) of your relatives and/or friends who will attend the accompaniment.
- Full birth certificate **with parents' names** in **international** format, with stamp dated **not older than 6 months**, send a copy and bring the original
- Proof of residence. A recent electricity or gas bill is sufficient.
- A confirmation that you are of sound judgement, preferably written by a doctor, if this is not possible it can be written by a solicitor or notary (you can say that you need this to write your will).

## IN ADDITION:

### **If you are married (and your spouse is alive)**

- Certified true copies **dated within the last 6 months** of: Your spouse's birth certificate **with names of parents**
- Marriage certificate
- Copy of your spouse's passport or identity card

### **If you are divorced**

The divorce certificate. This can be the original or a copy.

### **If you are widowed**

Your spouse's death certificate (original document or a certified true copy).

### **If you have never been married**

A celibacy certificate. If such a certificate does not exist in your country of residence, you need to obtain an affidavit sworn in front of a public notary or a solicitor. This must contain your first name and surname, first names and surnames of your parents, your date of birth, full residential address, and a statement: "I solemnly declare that I am single and never have been married".



# PREPARING TO GO TO SWITZERLAND

Once the provisional “green light” has been given, you can decide on an approximate date. You should tell LE as early as possible when you want to make use of their services: this allows for thorough preparation of all the necessary arrangements.

The guidelines of the Life-End Association require two consultations with a Swiss doctor, who will assess the reasons for the death wish and, if he accepts, issue the prescription for the barbiturate. There should be at least 14 days between the first and the second conversation. The first medical interview can be done by video call, the second must take place in person at the hotel. You must therefore spend one night in Switzerland before the AVD.

## **Nursing and/or care needs**

If you have nursing and/or care needs when travelling to and staying in Switzerland, please tell LE about this. They will help you plan at additional costs (hourly rate for a private nurse is around 70 Swiss Francs).

## **Arrangement for the Body**

You must indicate LE:

- the name of the person to whom the death certificate is to be sent
- the name of the **funeral service** to whom the ashes are to be sent (if you want them to be sent back)

## TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

### **Private car or ambulance**

This is an option for members living in Europe. There is a reliable Swiss service in which the ambulance comes to the home of the member to collect the member and returns directly to Basel. Please contact LE for more information about the service and the additional costs, should you wish to explore this possibility.

### **By air (including air ambulance)**

Wheelchair assistance can be arranged in advance with most airlines. LE can make arrangements for an ambulance to pick you up at the airport and bring you to the hotel. Easier and less expensive is to take a cab at the airport, if sitting upright is possible.

If you are interested in the possibility of an air ambulance, please contact LE for further details and (high) additional costs.

**Please note that these services are not included in the price of the assisted death.**

## COSTS

You should budget for personal expenses for travel and accommodation:

- One-way travel expenses for yourself to Basel. However, return tickets are often cheaper than one-way tickets.
- Return travel expenses for your companion/s.
- Accommodation in Basel for yourself and your companion/s, remembering that you need to stay there for three to four days (accommodation is less expensive across the border in nearby Germany or France).
- If you travel by plane or train: Cost of transport from your home to the airport/train station and from Basel airport/train station to your hotel.

## IN SWITZERLAND

### **On arrival in Basel**

If you need an ambulance, notify LE in advance and it will be arranged for you at extra cost. You can also take a taxi, in special cases a staff member of LE can pick you up.

### **Meeting the doctors**

The doctor will have your written request and medical reports. He needs to examine you, confirm that you are certain that you wish to die, and that you are of sound mind. He will also answer any questions you may have. The doctor will check that you can swallow the barbiturate unaided or open the valve yourself (in most cases we recommend intravenous application). In any case the drug must be administered by yourself.

### **The LE accompaniment**

On the location of the accompaniment, you will meet the LE attendants. They are kind and thoughtful and everything is done at the pace you want. For example, if you wish to spend time with the people who have come with you, the attendants will wait outside. With LE a physician or a nurse is also present, even though this is not requested by Swiss law.

You will sign several documents needed by the Swiss authorities. One of these is a Power of Attorney to the Association LE to enable it to handle your case with the local authority. This is a carefully drafted legal document but has no effect on your rights. The accompaniment is then described in detail. When you are ready, you can sit on a chair or lie on the bed, and the intravenous drip is placed, at first with saline solution only. We show you how you must open the handle, as only you yourself may open it. Only when you manage to do this is the barbiturate added to the saline solution. We videotape the moment when you open the handle to provide proof that you were not helped and you knew that you would die. For identification of the deceased, one relative or friend is needed.

### **The Swiss authorities**

As soon as you are dead, the attendants phone the local police station to report what has happened. A police officer as well as a doctor from the forensics office (coroner) will come. They may be delayed for up to 2 hours if they have other urgent demands on their time. At least one person who came with you must sign the paper of identification of the deceased.

LE will send your death certificate to the person you have indicated. A Swiss death certificate does not state the cause of death. Your ashes will also be sent back as soon as possible or can be dispersed in Switzerland if you prefer this. All this can take up to three weeks.

## **Death Certificate**

Will be sent to the person you indicate, two to three weeks after your death. There is no reason mentioned why you died.

## **Notification of death**

There is no requirement to notify the Registrar, Coroner or Procurator if a person dies abroad, but a death certificate will be required for legal reasons (probate etc.).

## **LEGAL POSITION**

It is not illegal to travel to Switzerland in order to have an assisted death. In certain countries persons who help organize an assisted death can be prosecuted. However, the few cases investigated have been dropped as it was not considered “in the public interest” to proceed with a prosecution.

Travelling to Switzerland to end one’s life is arduous and demands strength of purpose and determination. As the person accompanying, you must also be focused and strong-willed. Practical difficulties may arise and need to be sorted out quickly, and LE will do their best to help you.

A sense of humour can be of great help!

**We do recommend that you order the DVD “final Exit” here:**

<https://vimeo.com/ondemand/finalexit>

This will show you how the AVD takes place and gives you lots of information.

## APPENDIX 1: SUMMARY OF CHARGES FOR LIFECIRCLE/ETERNAL SPIRIT

### Payments to LC/LE

Payments to LC/LE must be made via bank transfer. **Credit cards and cheques are not accepted.** Some people find it easier to pay smaller sums, like the membership fees, by simply posting the bank notes in an envelope. However, this should always be done by registered mail.

Payment for an assisted death must be made at least a week before the accompaniment. As soon as a death occurs, the bank account is blocked so it is necessary to clear bank transfers beforehand.

### Account for payments in Swiss Francs only:

Account holder: Verein lifecircle  
Fichtlirain 16  
CH-4105 Biel-Benken  
Bank: Raiffeisenbank Basel, CH  
IBAN: **CH20 8080 8001 5429 6361 2**  
SWIFT/BIC: RAIFCH22E86

In case of surplus funds amount will be booked as a donation and will be used for members which can't afford an AVD.

LE statutes allow a reduction or even complete exemption from fees for members who live in modest economic circumstances, and this also applies to the contributions associated with preparing and completing an assisted death.

However, it is essential that any reduction of, or exemption from, contributions is discussed and agreed beforehand between the member and LE. You should send a written request for such a reduction, including proof of your income and assets (i.e. bank statements, documents of income).



| Lifecircle Membership                                                                                 | Swiss Francs (CHF) |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Annual Membership Fee                                                                                 | 50                 |
| <b>In advance of assisted (accompanied) suicide:</b>                                                  |                    |
| Payments due before you leave home. Eternal Spirit will send you appropriate invoice(s)               | Swiss Francs (CHF) |
| Preparation in order to reach a “provisional green light” (including fee for medical assessment etc.) | 3'500              |
| Two personal medical consultations                                                                    | 1'400              |
| Completion of assisted dying                                                                          | 3'000              |
| Official procedures following a death in Switzerland                                                  | 500                |
| Fees for funeral director and cremation                                                               | 2'100              |
| <b>TOTAL (payable in advance)</b>                                                                     | <b>10'550</b>      |

## APPENDIX 2: GETTING YOUR MEDICAL RECORDS AND APPROACHING YOUR DOCTOR

Be very careful about how much you involve your personal doctor and carers in your plans. You have a legal right to have a copy of your medical records without giving a reason, but even if you have a good relationship with your doctor, it is better not to reveal your intentions before having received the reports. Some GPs have been advised by their Defence Union that they might be liable to prosecution for assisting suicide if they give medical reports knowing the purpose to which they will be put. Legally your doctor can withhold all or part of your notes if, in his/her clinical judgement, their disclosure might result in your physical or mental harm.

You are entitled to ask for copies of letters from consultants to your GP and these usually provide a second source of medical information.

You may prefer to avoid the issue by making your request in writing but, even if you address the letter to the Practice Manager, only your doctor has the legal responsibility for authorising their release. A fee can be charged, depending on the amount of work, photocopying etc.

By the time planned for your assisted death, LE must have at least one medical record which is not older than 6 months. LE recommends all members inform their doctors about their wish to die, **after having received the reports**. The more doctors learn to accept their patients' wish, the better chance of legalizing assisted dying.

| Necessary original documents (the right to require additional documents is reserved in specific cases)                                                                                           | Married | Single | Widowed | Divorced |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|--------|---------|----------|
| Passport or identity card<br>- to be brought with you to Switzerland<br>- a simple copy to be sent in advance                                                                                    | X       | X      | X       | X        |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                  | X       | X      | X       | X        |
| Passport or identity card of your spouse, if married a simple copy is sufficient                                                                                                                 | X       |        |         |          |
| Full size birth certificate <b>international (with parents' names)</b> not older than 6 months to be obtained from the Registry Office of the place of birth or from the General Register Office | X       | X      | X       | X        |
| Marriage certificate to be obtained from the Registry office of the place of marriage or from the General Register Office                                                                        | X       |        |         |          |
| Certificate of no impediment of marriage affidavit required from a public notary, not older than 6 months                                                                                        |         | X      |         |          |
| Divorce certificate/ final decree with statement of legal effect                                                                                                                                 |         |        |         | X        |
| Death Certificate of your spouse                                                                                                                                                                 |         |        | X       |          |
| Certificate of residence/affidavit required from a public notary                                                                                                                                 | X       | X      | X       | X        |