

# 'Assisted Suicide Due to Old Age' Gets Backing in Switzerland

Swiss assisted suicide group Exit says it will consider helping elderly people who do not have a terminal illness to kill themselves.

Exit's General Assembly backed the change in a vote on Saturday, prompting warnings from a Swiss medical group that it could put pressure on healthy older people to commit suicide.

The change means elderly people would not need to provide as much proof of an illness as younger people.

Exit said details of the changes, which open the way for "suicide due to old age," still needed to be worked out and the move would not come into force immediately.

The Swiss Medical Association, which is an umbrella group for more than 70 medical organizations, spoke out against the decision.

"It gives us cause for concern because it cannot be ruled out that elderly healthy people could come under pressure of taking their own life," said organization president Dr. Jürg Schlup.

At Westminster, Lord Falconer is seeking to introduce **assisted suicide** while in Scotland Green MSP Patrick Harvie is fronting a bill with the same purpose.

However, critics including Christian ethicist Peter Saunders argue against any such law change.

Saunders, campaign director of the Care Not Killing Alliance,

has warned that changing the law would “place subtle pressure on vulnerable people to end their lives, for fear of being a financial, emotional or care burden upon others.”

A disabled peer, Baroness Campbell, has also spoken out on the issue saying: “The existing law on assisted suicide rests on a natural frontier.”

“It rests on the principle that we do not involve ourselves in deliberately bringing about the deaths of other people,” she commented.

“What the proponents of ‘assisted dying’ want is to replace that clear and bright line with an arbitrary and permeable one,” the peer added.