

## Board of examiners

**Prof. Suzanne van de Vathorst**

Department of Ethics and Philosophy  
Erasmus MC Rotterdam, the Netherlands

**Prof. Johannes van Delden**

Julius Center for Health Sciences  
UMC Utrecht, the Netherlands

**Prof. Mark De Ridder**

Department of Translational Radiation Oncology, Physics and Supportive Care  
UZ Brussel

**Prof. Wim Distelmans**

Department of Supportive and Palliative Care  
Vrije Universiteit Brussel

**Prof. An De Sutter**

Department of General Practice and Primary Health Care  
Ghent University

**Prof. Kurt Audenaert**

Department of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology  
Ghent University

**Prof. Dirk Devroey, Chair**

Department of Family Medicine and Chronic Care  
Vrije Universiteit Brussel

**Prof. Kenneth Chambaere, Promoter VUB**

End-of-Life Care Research Group  
Vrije Universiteit Brussel & Ghent University

**Prof. Luc Deliens, Promoter UGent**

End-of-Life Care Research Group  
Vrije Universiteit Brussel & Ghent University

**Prof. Joachim Cohen, Co-promoter VUB**

End-of-Life Care Research Group  
Vrije Universiteit Brussel & Ghent University



Joint PhD VUB & UGent  
2017-2018

INVITATION to the Public defence of

**Sigrid DIERICKX**

To obtain the academic degree of

**'DOCTOR IN SOCIAL HEALTH SCIENCES''**

**'DOCTOR IN HEALTH SCIENCES'**

**Euthanasia practice in Belgium : A population-based  
evaluation of trends and currently debated issues**

**Thursday 5 July 2018**

**Gents Universiteitsmuseum**

Krijgslaan 281 (gebouw S30)

9000 Gent

## Summary of the dissertation

Euthanasia is subject of intense debate in many countries where life expectancy is high and degenerative diseases are the leading causes of death. In Belgium, euthanasia can be practiced under strict, legally defined conditions since 2002. Concerns about developments in euthanasia practice in Belgium persist, particularly abroad. Additionally, empirical evidence on the euthanasia practice in countries where it is legal is needed to inform current euthanasia debates. For this dissertation, a secondary analysis of the official databases of all euthanasia cases reported to the Federal Control and Evaluation Committee for Euthanasia was performed. Also, data from a population-based survey among physicians attending a representative sample of death certificates in Flanders were analysed.

This dissertation provides insight into the Belgian euthanasia practice by studying trends in euthanasia practice and by providing empirical evidence on particular issues that have been subject of (international) debate, i.e. involvement of palliative care in euthanasia practice, euthanasia for people with psychiatric disorders or dementia, and registration of euthanasia on death certificates. This dissertation underlines the importance of detailed monitoring of euthanasia practice. To meet this, it is to be recommended that monitoring by the Federal Control and Evaluation Committee for Euthanasia is supplemented by thorough empirical research into euthanasia and other medical end-of-life practices.

## Curriculum Vitae

Sigrid Dierickx was born on April 6th, 1990 in Dendermonde, Belgium. She holds a master's degree in Sociology (2013, Ghent University) and Health Care Management and Policy (2014, KU Leuven). In September 2014 she joined the End-of-Life Care Research Group (Vrije Universiteit Brussel & Ghent University) as a doctoral researcher to study the euthanasia practice in Belgium. Currently, she still works as a researcher at the End-of-Life Care Research Group and is involved in a study on supportive and palliative day care centres in Flanders.