

Identical twins die after seeking euthanasia when they discovered they would go blind and never see each other again

- 45-year-old twins were born deaf and requested to die after being told they were both going blind

A pair of identical twins have died after seeking euthanasia when they discovered they were both going blind.

The 45-year-old twins were born deaf and requested to die after being told they would never see each other again.

In a unique case under Belgium's euthanasia laws, doctors at Brussels University Hospital ended the twins' lives by lethal injection on December 14.

The brothers, who have not been named, had spent their entire lives living together and both worked as cobblers.

In 2011, there were 1,133 cases of euthanasia in Belgium, making up around one per cent of deaths in the country.

Euthanasia in Belgium differs from Switzerland, where the famous Dignitas clinic is based, in that patients can have their lives terminated as opposed to relying on 'assisted suicide'.

The option to die is usually only available to patients suffering unbearable pain who can also make their wish to die expressly clear.

The twins' case was unique therefore, as neither was suffering extreme physical pain or was terminally ill.

David Dufour, the doctor who presided over the euthanasia, told Belgium's RTL television news channel that the twins had taken the decision in 'full conscience'.

He said they were 'very happy' and it had been a 'relief' to see the end of their suffering.

'They had a cup of coffee in the hall, it went well and a rich conversation,' Mr. Dufour said.

'Then the separation from their parents and brother was very serene and beautiful.

'At the last there was a little wave of their hands and then they were gone.'

Belgium was the second country in the world after the Netherlands to legalise euthanasia in 2002.

Although euthanasia remains homicide in the eyes of Belgian law, it is not prosecuted or punishable if a doctor meets certain legal exceptions

Other jurisdictions where it is permitted include Luxembourg, Switzerland and the states of Oregon, Washington and Montana in the United States.