

Matesanz: "The Spanish attitude towards organ donation has not changed in the last 25 years"

Brussels (09/10/2013) – Manuel Ruiz Rico

- **This was the statement made by the Director of the ONT, who participated in a European workshop in Brussels on organ transplants and donations organised by the European Commission**
- **The workshop was a prelude to the European Day for Organ Donation on Saturday 12 October, for which the central event will take place in the Belgian capital**

"The Spanish attitude to the acceptance of organ donations has not changed in the last 25 years", ensured Rafael Matesanz, the Director of the *Organización Nacional de Trasplantes* (ONT, National Transplant Organisation), who participated in a European workshop on organ transplants and donations organised in Brussels by the European Commission. This event is a prelude to the 15th edition of the European Day for Organ Donation on Saturday 12 October, for which the central event will take place in Brussels.

According to Matesanz, "when the ONT came into existence in 1989, surveys showed that 58.4% of the Spanish population was in favour of donating organs when they died. By 2006, there had been no change at all to the percentage, namely 58.3%".

All in all, this 58.3% contrasts with the negative statistics on organ donations from the deceased family member at the time of his/her death, which is currently 16% in Spain, "a much lower percentage than 20, 30 or 40 years ago", assures Matesanz.

This difference is due to both the Spanish public health system in relation to transplants of organs in recent decades and to the "good work of health professionals in its hospitals and also the efforts made to promote these actions in society, particularly through the communication media". However, he insisted, "when the general population is consulted in a routine survey, the percentages are the same as 25 years ago".

Matesanz has pointed out the extent of damage which can be caused by a stream of negative information on organ donations and transplants, referring for instance to the case in Germany last year where a number of doctors were accused and are being sentenced for allegedly manipulating the waiting list in order to allow certain patients to benefit to the detriment of others. "Of course", he emphasized, "this is not a problem of communication on transplants, it is a problem of ethics, a measure which causes significant harm to the transplant system in all countries, not only in the one where the transplant is performed".

As shown at this European event on transplants and donations, Spain boasts some of the best figures in Europe, and is in fact the European leader in organ (deceased) donation, with a rate of 35.3 persons per million, and only Croatia (33.6), Belgium (30.1), Malta (30) and Portugal (28.1) have similar rates. Countries such as Norway (24.5), England (17), Netherlands (13.6) or Denmark (13.6) ranked much lower, with Romania (3.6) and Bulgaria (0.5) tailing the list.

As regards the number of transplanted patients, Spain is second in Europe with 86.4 transplanted patients per million, second only to Norway (91.4) and just ahead of Portugal (75.9). Greece (20.4) and Bulgaria (3.4) come last.