

# Spain has the highest rate of donation of deceased people's organs in Europe

Brussels (28/11/2014) Manuel Ruiz Rico

- **A European workshop held in Brussels highlights the innovative role of the Spanish transplant system, a model for the EU**

- **In 2013, the number of organs transplanted in the EU exceeded 31 000 for the first time, although someone on the waiting list still dies every two hours**

For the first time ever, the number of organs transplanted in the EU has passed the 31 000 mark. In 2013, the specific figure was 31 165, i.e. 85 a day, an average of 3.5 an hour. Following a fall in the year-on-year figure in 2012, the 30 701 organs transplanted in 2011 remained the previous all-time high. This data was provided at a workshop on transplants held in Brussels and organised by the European Union's Directorate-General for Health and Consumers.

The number of transplant-donors also reached a new high last year. But this has been the norm over the last decade. (2007 was the only year in which the figure did not rise.) Thus, in 2013, organs were transplanted from a total of 9 912 deceased and [4 450] living donors<sup>1</sup>.

The increase in this category between 2004 and 2013 was 33 per cent in total, due to increases both in the harvesting of organs from deceased donors (up 18 per cent) and in transplants from live donors (up 86 per cent).

One statistic which, fortunately, has not posted a new record is the number of patients on the waiting list for transplants. Compared with the 63 800 people on the waiting list in 2012, there were 63 000 at the close of 2013, 50 000 of whom were waiting for a kidney.

Even so, 4 100 people died in the 28 Member States last year while officially waiting for an organ, a higher number than the 3 780 people the previous year. This means that eleven people a day, almost one every two hours, died waiting for an organ in 2013.

According to the information provided at this European meeting on health, Spain is doing well. In fact, it has the highest rate of organ donation from deceased people in the whole of Europe, with 35.3 donations per million people, ahead of Malta (35), Belgium (29.2), Portugal (27.8), France (26), Austria (24.5) and the United Kingdom (21).

Spain also has the second highest rate of kidney transplants, with its rate of 54.4 per million inhabitants only bettered by Holland (56.8).

The conference highlighted the innovative role of the Spanish model with its appointment of a transplant donor coordinator, a model 'now followed by all Member States and which saw donor numbers in Spain rise from 14 per million people in 1989 to 35 currently'.

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<sup>1</sup> For more details, see Facts & Figures report (in particular page 3 for donation figures) at [http://ec.europa.eu/health/blood\\_tissues\\_organ/docs/ev\\_20141126\\_factsfigures\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/health/blood_tissues_organ/docs/ev_20141126_factsfigures_en.pdf)

Rafael Matesanz, Spanish national transplant donor coordinator, was keen to point out that 'when people in Spain are asked in surveys whether or not they are willing to donate, the proportion of people saying yes, at just under 60 per cent, has not changed in 20 years. However,' he went on, 'the numbers of donations and transplants have multiplied in that time. Why is this? The answer is very clear: because the system is effective,' Matesanz maintained.

As for the cost-effectiveness of transplants, Stefaan Van der Spiegel, team leader of Substances of Human Origin at the European Commission, left no room for doubt. 'According to the cost-benefit studies conducted in this area, for each transplant performed, the system saves 10 000 euros per year per patient, and that is without taking into account that, after receiving transplants, patients often go back to having a normal life and to their work, generating further wealth.'

By way of example, Van der Spiegel highlighted the case of Spain. 'The annual cost of transplants there,' he said, 'is 171 million euros, which is recovered every year through the healthcare savings from transplants. For example,' he added, 'the Spanish healthcare system saves 46 million euros a year just by taking patients who have received kidney transplants off dialysis.'

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