

Irén Kármán couldn't help shedding a tear

IRÉN KÁRMÁN, <http://www.stop.hu>

The journalist Irén Kármán was in Brussels recently. She took lots of interesting photographs in the city, but what interested her most was the real reason for her trip: she was attending a workshop on organ donation organised by the European Commission.

'Hungary has recently joined Eurotransplant, which was an important decision for a number of reasons. I was invited because a while ago I did a lot of work for the Association of Organ Transplant Recipients [Szervátültetettek Szövetsége] and the Transplant Foundation [Transzplantáltak Alapítványa]. At that time Larry Hagman came to Hungary and I campaigned alongside him for greater awareness of the issue,' says Kármán, who believes that positive role models are important and that there is a need for genuine human stories to clear away the 'mental fog' in the minds of some on the subject of organ donation.

It was very interesting how real-life stories clarified what is at stake. There was one case of a donor family and a recipient. The donor was a mother whose four-year-old daughter had fallen down the stairs, which resulted in a cerebral oedema; by the time they reached the hospital, the little girl was brain-dead. The amazing thing was that the mother shared this story at a very formal professional workshop, and many people just burst into tears,' says Kármán, who is no stranger to this issue, recounting her experiences to STOP. 'In 1997, at the World Transplant Games in Sydney, I saw a "donor wall" for the first time. It was a notice-board displaying photographs of organ donors. The issue was handled completely openly; there was no medical confidentiality about who was going to be receiving the organ of a deceased child or family member. Actually, one brain-dead person can save the lives of five people. There they brought the recipient and the donor family together. Friendships were built on the realisation that the dead donor in effect continues to live on. It's an incredible thing, especially when it's the life of a small child at stake. It's impossible to resist a tear,' says Kármán, whose film 'Rozi' also focuses on the human aspects of organ donation.