

Bulgaria bottom of EU transplant league table

12 Europeans die each day waiting for a donor
934 in queue for new organs



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In the European Union, 12 people die each day waiting for a transplant. The futile wait for a life-saving operation claims around 4 000 such victims a year. A forum organised by the



European Commission to promote organ donation highlighted the fact that a total of 63 000 patients, including 934 Bulgarians, are officially on waiting lists for transplants. Despite reported progress on the transplant front, Bulgaria continues to languish in bottom place in the EU league table of donor numbers.

Europe

Kidney transplant candidates, numbering approximately 50 000,

constitute the biggest group of Europeans hoping to receive a new organ. These are followed by patients whose survival depends on a liver transplant - 6 700. Another 3 450 Europeans are in need of a new heart. Over 2 000 EU Member State residents are hoping for a lung transplant. 'This is not a quality-of-life issue, it's actually a matter of life or death, and all of these people want to go on living,' said Axel Rahmel, former director of the Eurotransplant organ-exchange network. 'Top position' for organ donation in 2013 went to Spain, with 35.3 deceased donors per million of population, followed by Croatia with 33.5. Spain reported a veritable transplant boom, recording 130 percent growth in just 10 years. A major factor has been the active involvement of 'donation coordinators'. They are the key link between the deceased's relatives and doctors in the difficult period following a loved one's death when a decision has to be taken on whether organs are to be donated.

Bulgaria

The forum heard that, despite recorded growth, our country continues to bring up the rear in terms of transplant numbers. Since the beginning of the year, there have been 79 transplants from deceased donors in Bulgaria, which represents significant progress compared with 19 such operations performed two years ago. In 2013 a total of 28 kidney transplants were carried out in our country, compared with 2 552 in Spain. Patients awaiting a new kidney, lung, heart or pancreas in Bulgaria number 934.

The gift of life

The risk of losing her brother when he was suffering from kidney failure six years ago prompted 40-year-old Sofia C. of Portugal to become his donor. 'The prospect for his future was either haemodialysis for the rest of his life or a transplant - but we didn't know when or even whether such an operation would take place,' Sofia told *Telegraph*. 'Originally, our parents wanted to be donors, but they were too old and I was the next in line carrying the best chance of compatibility,' she added. Once a comprehensive compatibility test had given the 'green light' for the operation, Sofia became her brother's donor. 'I don't regret it for one moment,' she said. 'My only reminders of the operation now are the scar it left and the text message that my brother sent me a few hours after the transplant - "I live through you," he wrote.' Lia van Kempen of Belgium took the agonising decision to donate the organs of her deceased nine-year-old daughter, and in so doing saved the lives of three people.