

Price of a transplant

An organ transplant recipient saves Europe an average of 10 000 euros a year.

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At the end of 2013, around 50 000 people were on kidney transplant waiting lists in the 28 EU Member States. This was announced at the fifth Journalist Workshop on Organ Donation and Transplantation organised by the European Commission. The Bulgarian waiting list had 853 names on it, according to the country's Executive Agency for Transplantation (IAT). For the treatment of patients in the final stage of renal failure, France for example spends an average of 400 million euros annually, 77% of which on haemodialysis and 5% on peritoneal dialysis, said Stefaan van der Spiegel of the European Commission. A patient in the first year after transplant, by contrast, costs only 6% of the amount that would otherwise have been incurred. The speaker also cited the example of the United Kingdom, where in 2009 alone 23 000 liver transplant recipients saved the state 512 million pounds which had previously been spent on treatment. In Spain, every transplant represents an annual state budget saving of 21 000 euros. At the same time, European statistics show that mortality among patients waiting for a heart, liver or lung transplant ranges from 15 to 30%. The figures indicate that patients on haemodialysis survive for an average of around 10 years, whereas those who receive a kidney transplant have on average survived for around 20 years. Over 93% of people receiving a new liver survive for at least one year. France, for example, saves 80 000 euros annually in haemodialysis costs when just one patient receives a new kidney.

In all, 6 700 Europeans (of whom 43 Bulgarians) are awaiting a liver transplant, while 3 450 people (23 Bulgarians) urgently need a new heart. A total of 2 100 European citizens (8 Bulgarians) are waiting for a new lung and 1 300 (6 Bulgarians) for a pancreas transplant. Until a few months ago, Bulgaria's record year for transplants was 2010 (68). That record has been broken in 2014, however, with 79 organ transplants having been performed so far this year.

Photo caption:

Bulgaria's first patient to receive a lung transplant (in Vienna) pictured here with the team looking after him at *Tokuda* hospital in Sofia.

