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**Organ transplants: Cheap but threatened by cuts**

Sub-headline: EU: Transplant rates already falling in Greece, Ireland and Portugal

Brussels (APA) – Organ transplants save thousands of lives in Europe every year, yet the economic crisis and eurozone woes are placing even this vital health service in jeopardy. "We are already seeing falling transplantation rates in countries such as Greece, Ireland and Portugal", warned Paola Testori Coggi, Head of the Health and Consumer Protection DG, on Tuesday at an EU media seminar on this subject in Brussels.

Short-termism of this kind by countries in dire financial straits or facing cuts – especially in the health sector – is economically nonsensical, according to Paola Testori Coggi: "We take the view that, even in times of economic crisis, transplants should not suffer." Next Saturday (22 October) is the European Day for Organ Donation and Transplantation.

She continued by quoting figures from Spain about the cost-effectiveness of transplants. "The data show, for example, that one year's dialysis for someone with chronic kidney failure costs around 50 000 euros. A kidney transplant also costs 50 000 euros but, after a year, that represents a saving."

The EU wants to encourage all Member States not to seek savings in this area. Paola Testori Coggi: "We will be actively canvassing our Member States to find out how they organise transplantation at national level. The EU is not empowered to intervene in national legislation in this field, but we have been able, for example, to develop a framework for the safety and quality of transplantation. We also encourage exchanges between experts in countries where the system is highly developed and experts from other countries."

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