

Science/Medicine/Health/EU/Austria/Background

Organ transplants: 56 000 people on the waiting lists

Sub-headline: Ten percent of patients die – transplant rates falling

Brussels (APA) – Ever more desperately ill people need an organ transplant, but donor rates in Europe are falling. Some 56 000 patients are currently on the waiting lists, ten percent of whom die every year before a life-saving operation can take place. These are the worrying figures presented on Tuesday at an EU media workshop in Brussels:

- In 2010, around 18 200 kidney transplants, 6 600 liver transplants, almost 2 000 heart transplants, 1 500 lung transplants, 770 pancreas transplants and some 50 partial bowel transplants were carried out in the EU.

- The need: 56 000 patients are currently waiting for a transplant in the EU. Every year, around ten percent of them (5 500) die on the waiting list.

- As an illustration, 615 heart transplants were carried out in 2010 in the context of the Eurotransplant network (Benelux countries, Austria, Germany, Slovenia and Croatia), but there were 1 193 patients on the waiting list.

- Since 1989, the number of organ transplants in the Eurotransplant countries has remained about the same (between 3 500 and 3 700). However, the number of patients on the waiting lists has risen from around 8 000 to 10 768 (2010).

- For liver transplants, the ratio was 1 793 operations compared to 2 695 people on the waiting list.

- Even where alternative treatments exist, an organ donation is still the best strategy to tackle chronic kidney failure. The survival rates for patients on dialysis are 78 percent after one year and just 32 percent after five years. Transplants are gradually saving ever more lives.

- The main problem is the supply of organs. There are huge differences around the EU:

On average in the EU, there were 15.7 organ donations per million inhabitants last year (9 262 donors).

The figures have slowly been falling for years. In 2009, the EU average was still 16.5 donor organs per million inhabitants.

The highest rate in the EU in 2010 was in Spain, at 32 per million inhabitants, followed by Croatia at 30.7 and Portugal at 30.2.

Austria was in fifth place in 2010, with 23.3 organ donations from brain-dead donors. Bottom of the list were Bulgaria (2.7 per million) and Romania (3.3 per million). Even countries such as Germany (15.8 per million inhabitants) and the UK (16.4 per million) scored relatively badly.

In Austria in 2010, 191 deceased patients were identified as potential donors and had organs removed, a fall of 8.6 percent compared to the previous year. A total of 701 transplants of organs from deceased donors were carried out, a fall of 3.3 percent.

In Austria, too, there were dramatic differences, in some cases, between notified transplant rates in the various *Bundesländer*. The lowest rates in 2010 were found in Burgenland (7 per million), while Salzburg

(9.4) and the Tyrol (12.7) also scored badly. Leading the field were Vorarlberg (32.5) and Upper Austria (29.8), whilst the figure for Vienna was 21.2 per million, in Lower Austria 17.4, in Carinthia 26.8 and in Styria 24 per million.

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