

## The European Day for Organ Donation and Transplantation

Organised by the Council of Europe in a different country every year since 1996, the European Organ Donation Day (EODD) aims at raising public awareness on the need for organ donation and at promoting the principle of voluntary and non-remunerated donation.

### Essential points

Organ, tissues and cells transplantation is one of the great medical success stories of modern times and is the only life-saving treatment for end-stage organ failure in many conditions.

Key figures from the annual world-wide survey on transplantation show the dire situation of thousands of patients who suffer in silence:

- in 2017, more than **144 000 patients** in Council of Europe member states were on waiting lists (WL), representing an increase of 10% compared to 2013 figures;
- the same year, while nearly 43 000 patients were transplanted (+12% 2013-2017), 50 392 were added onto a WL – equivalent to nearly **6 new patients added to a waiting list every hour** across Europe;
- more patients on WLs, combined with the chronic lack of organs, tissues and cells available, also meant that still thousands of patients died while waiting for a transplant (6518 versus 6949 in 2016 representing a slight decrease); **an average of 18 people on waiting lists die every day** across Europe;

### The EODD event in 2018

In line with the EDQM's efforts to improve this situation, EODD is organised specifically:

- to encourage debate, provide information and sensitise the public on organ, tissue and cell donation and transplantation so that each person can decide for themselves;
- to establish trust among the general public towards responsible, ethical and non-commercial donation and transplantation;
- to honour and thank all organ donors and their families and to thank transplantation professionals throughout Europe whose hard work helps to save lives and to improve the quality of life of many people; and
- to raise awareness among governments of the need to support and allocate sufficient resources to organ donation programmes at national level.

The theme of this year's event is **"Be ready to save lives, Become a superhero! Say yes to organ, tissue and cell donation"**.

The event will be hosted by the Republic of Moldova and Agentia de Transplant, the Moldovan National Foundation for Organ Donation and Transplantation, on 13th October 2018 in Chisinau (more information on the event can be found here: [www.transplant.gov.md](http://www.transplant.gov.md)).

## Communication and Organ Donation Campaigns in member states

As the organising institution of the EODD, the Council of Europe's EDQM has created materials and visuals for the international campaign and developed a social media campaign comprising a dedicated webpage [HERE](#), and a [Facebook page](#). There are facts, figures, real stories/testimonies and experiences about transplantation to provide Europeans with relevant and exhaustive information.

If you would like more information on initiatives and contact persons in member states you can contact the EDQM.

## The status of donations and transplantation in Europe

Europe lacks organ, tissue and cells for transplantation.

The complete set of data per country is published in [Newsletter Transplant](#).

Several posters have been created to illustrate the need for organs such as [kidney](#) and [liver](#) as well as for [tissues and cells](#).

Important figures to illustrate the needs are highlighted on a [leaflet](#) well as on social media to capture the attention of the general public on this issue.

## Key issues concerning Organ, Tissue and Cell donation

### ***What do religions say?***

The major religions support the idea of organ donation and transplantation. Become a superhero, say yes to organ donation and help save the lives of the thousands of patients on a waiting list. Donors are needed regardless of their religion or origins. Here's more information on each religion's teachings:

Catholicism - Organ donation after death is a noble and meritorious act and is to be encouraged as an expression of generous solidarity. (Pope Francis, Bishop of Rome)

Buddhism - Giving is the greatest of Buddhist virtues. The Buddha in a previous life gave his body to a starving tigress who could not feed her cubs. There are many such Jātakas Tales, some in which he even gave his eyes to someone who wanted them. What loss do I suffer to give an unwanted organ after my death to give another person life? (Dr Desmond Biddulph, Chairman of The Buddhist Society)

Hinduism - Organ donation is consistent with Hindu beliefs as it can help to save the life of others. (The Late Mr Om Parkash Sharma MBE, President, National Council of Hindu Temples UK)

Islam - If you happened to be ill and in need of a transplant, you certainly would wish that

someone would help you by providing the needed organ. (Sheikh Dr MA Zaki Badawi, Principal, Muslim College, London)

Judaism - One who saves a single life – it is as if he has saved an entire world. (Pirke D’Rav Eliezer, Chapter 48)

Sikhism- The Sikh religion teaches that life continues after death in the soul, and not the physical body. The last act of giving and helping others through organ donation is both consistent with and in the spirit of Sikh teachings. (Lord Singh of Wimbledon CBE, Director of the Network of Sikh Organisations, UK - endorsed by Sikh Authorities in Amritsar, Punjab)

### ***What about organ donation within ethnic minorities?***

In certain European countries, black, Asian and minority ethnic groups may face longer periods on waiting lists for an organ transplant, due to shortages of donors from the same communities. Learn more about the importance of ethnical backgrounds when it comes to organ donation. Everyone can be a superhero, especially those who belong to minorities experiencing high shortages of organs for donation.

In the UK for instance, the NHS informs that on average one in five persons who die on a transplant waiting list are from a black, Asian or ethnic minority background. The reason behind this situation is that people from black and Asian communities are more likely to develop conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes and certain forms of hepatitis than white people. This makes them more likely to need a transplant, which implies that if more people in these communities would support organ donation, more lives would be saved thanks to enhanced organ compatibility. Although many black and Asian patients are able to receive a transplant from a white donor, for many the best match will come from a donor from the same ethnic background.

### ***The gender perspective***

The Council of Europe’s European Committee on Organ Transplantation (CD-P-TO) has started to consider gender equality aspects in its work. In the latest issue of *Newsletter Transplant*, the EDQM has for the first time collected data disaggregated by sex for both organ donors and recipients. This method is in line with the commitment of the CD-P-TO to take due account of a gender perspective in the performance of its tasks and to strive to achieve gender mainstreaming in all its policy areas. Gender is an important variable to take into account for efficient health policies that are adapted to the needs of the whole population. As available research reveals gender-based differences in relation to both donors and recipients of organs, data by gender can give better insight and hence support the definition of more relevant national policies.

## **The role of the European Committee on Organ Transplantation**

In the field of health, the Council of Europe coordinates inter-governmental co-operation, involving experts from European states and contributions by other international organisations such as the World Health Organization and the European Union.

The CD-P-TO is the steering committee in charge of organ transplantation activities. It actively promotes:

- the non-commercialisation of organ, tissue and cell donation;
- the fight against trafficking;
- and the development of ethical, quality and safety standards in the field of organ, tissue and cell donation and human application.

Its activities include the collection of international data and monitoring of practices in Europe, the transfer of knowledge and expertise between organisations and experts through training and networking and the elaboration of reports, surveys and recommendations.

It supervises the activities of a number of individual projects, as well as the *ad hoc* Working Groups on the "Guide to the Quality and Safety of Organs for Transplantation" and the "Guide to the Quality and Safety of Tissues and Cells for Human Application". These Guides have become standard references in Europe and beyond, providing quality, safety and ethical guidance for professionals in the field<sup>1</sup> – a major achievement of the Council of Europe.

The Committee also creates legal and guidance instruments, as well as laymen brochures aimed at familiarising the general population with various topics of interest. The most recent ones are *Exercise your way to better post-transplant health* (July 2016) and *Umbilical cord blood banking. A guide for parents* (2nd edition, 2016).

The outcomes of this work are disseminated to the member states in order to stimulate evolution of national legislation.

## Council of Europe reference texts on transplantation

Over the years, the CD-P-TO has produced a set of [Resolutions and Recommendations](#) subsequently adopted by the CoE Committee of Ministers. Although not legally binding, all these documents have profoundly impacted national legal and ethical frameworks, organisational models, and professional practices:

[Resolution CM/Res\(2017\)2 on establishing procedures for the management of patients having received an organ transplant abroad upon return to their home country to receive follow-up care](#) This new resolution aims to protect all patients who have received an organ transplant, regardless of the circumstances in which it was obtained, and to safeguard public health by recommending that all patients undergoing organ transplantation are systematically registered in national transplant records.

While many countries are making notable efforts to develop and maximise their donation and transplantation programmes, there are exceptional circumstances in which some

<sup>1</sup> The EDQM publications are available here: <https://www.edqm.eu/freepub>

patients may be properly referred for transplantation abroad by their treating physicians. At the same time, organ shortages, or lack of access to a deceased-donor programme, have encouraged organ trafficking and human trafficking for the purpose of organ removal, often involving patients seeking to receive an organ transplant outside their home country.

[Resolution CM/Res\(2017\)1 on principles for the selection, evaluation, donation and follow-up of the non-resident living organ donors](#) This resolution, elaborated by the European Committee on Organ Transplantation (CD-P-TO), is aimed at protecting non-resident living donors who, for a number of reasons – economic, emotional, cultural or physical – may be particularly vulnerable, and whose post-donation care and follow-up may be difficult to guarantee.

This Resolution provides much-needed guidance for all countries accepting non-resident organs donors into their living donation programmes and details rigorous donor selection, evaluation and follow-up measures that these countries should set in place to ensure the protection and well-being of these donors.

The CD-P-TO has also contributed to the elaboration of the new [Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs](#), which provides clarity on the practices that must be criminalised and strengthens mechanisms for cooperation and victim protection. This is of the utmost importance considering that, according to the WHO, 5–10% of all transplants worldwide result from organ trafficking. Furthermore, through the establishment of an international network of National Focal Points and a Database on Travel for Transplantation, the CD-P-TO is gaining better knowledge on transplant-related crimes and elaborating comprehensive tools and recommendations to address them.

## Other Council of Europe reference texts:

- The [Convention on action against trafficking in human beings](#) and its [Explanatory Report](#) (European Treaty Series, No. 197), which opened for signature in Warsaw on 16 May 2005 and entered into force on 1 February 2008, addresses the trafficking of human beings, including for the purpose of organ removal.
- [Additional Protocol to the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine Concerning Transplantation of Organs and Tissues of Human Origin](#) (European Treaty Series #186), which opened for signature on 24 January 2002 in Strasbourg and entered into force on 1 May 2006, aims at protecting the dignity and identity of everyone and to guarantee, without discrimination, respect for his or her integrity and other rights and fundamental freedoms with regard to transplantation of organs and tissues of human origin.
- [Oviedo Convention: Protection of Human Rights and Dignity of the Human Being with Regard to the Application of Biology and Medicine](#) (European Treaty Series #164), signed on 4 April 1997 and entered into force on 1 December 1999, is the first legally binding international text designed to preserve human dignity, rights and freedoms

through a series of principles and prohibitions against the misuse of biological and medical advances.

[Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms](#) (European Treaty Series #005), drafted in 1950 by the Council of Europe and entered into force on 3 September 1953, is an international treaty aiming at protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms in Europe.

### Further information:

[www.coe.int/organ-donation](http://www.coe.int/organ-donation)

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