

28 April 2024

ESOT Open Letter to the newly elected Members of the European Parliament

Eliminating inequalities in organ transplantation across Europe

ESOT's mission is to improve outcomes for patients with terminal organ disease by means of transplantation, organ regeneration and substitution.

Throughout Europe, there are widespread inequalities across the organ transplantation pathway. Disparities in access to transplantation lead to avoidable mortality among individuals with end-stage organ disease. In Europe, an average of 21 patients die each day while waiting for an organ transplant.

Additionally, disparities in healthcare professional practices, driven by a lack of consensus, contribute to wide variations in processes and clinical care. This is further compounded by considerable disparities in the ability to collect robust data on organ donation and transplantation procedures, which is essential for supporting an evidence-based practice. This challenge is particularly pronounced in settings with limited resources. As a result, data gaps persist and hinder critical aspects of the donation and transplantation process, such as equitable organ allocation, timely patient referral, efficient resource management and the capability to conduct an effective transplant follow-up.

Transforming the organ transplantation landscape

The EU Action Plan on Organ Donation and Transplantation (2009–2015) identified ten priority actions to improve access to transplantation and address existing inequalities. However, the plan has succeeded only in part, and there is still ample room for improvement to increase transplant activity and reduce differences between countries. Renewed action is therefore urgently needed to drive fair and sustainable progress in organ transplantation throughout Europe.

ESOT is committed to building collaborative partnerships with Members of the European Parliament from 2024 to 2029 to prioritise actions that drive and increase equitable access to transplantation across the continent.

In order to transform the organ transplantation landscape over the next five years, ESOT recommends the following actions and interventions:

Prioritise the advancement of scientific research and data collection in transplantation

- Implementing supportive regulatory frameworks and creating funding opportunities for data collection initiatives to promote and share best practice across Europe.

- Promoting specific grant programmes and funding opportunities within EU research, such as the introduction of a transplant-specific call for tender focused on supporting research projects related to organ transplantation.

Strengthen collaboration among EU member states

- Promoting initiatives that support cross-centre collaboration and enable benchmarking of organ donation and transplantation rates and outcomes between countries. This will drive consensus on transplant eligibility criteria and post-transplant management whilst identifying gaps in knowledge, leading to improved clinical practices across Europe.
- Reaching a consensus on frameworks and policies to facilitate organ exchange across the EU and better meet the demand for transplantation.

Optimise the role of healthcare professionals (HCPs)

- Promoting benchmark educational standards for transplantation medicine and surgery, as well as supporting the implementation of widely-accessible guidelines for each step of the transplantation pathway.
- Supporting professional education and cross-centre collaboration to ensure consistency and decision-making of the highest quality.

Enhance patient and public awareness and knowledge

- Supporting awareness and education initiatives through a tailored approach, both at national and cross-country level, to highlight the crucial role of organ donation and the benefits of transplantation.
- Promoting the implementation of a shared decision model in every aspect of transplant care that increases the responsibility of people with transplants for their long-term care.

Elevate the role of patients and patient advocacy groups in the policymaking process

- Including patient and patient advocacy groups in the development of national initiatives and legislation to address the active needs of organ donors and transplant recipients.

In recognising the critical need to achieving equitable access in transplantation and the imperative for collective action, we urge incoming Members of the European Parliament to join us in championing these recommendations.

Together, we can create a brighter future where every individual in Europe has fair and timely access to transplantation.

Yours sincerely,

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