

Action plan on organ donation and transplantation (2009-2015): strengthened cooperation between Member States

2009/2104(INI) - 08/12/2008 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: to present an Action Plan on Organ Donation and Transplantation (2009-2015).

BACKGROUND: currently, the demand for organs exceeds the number of available organs in all Member States and this demand for organs is increasing faster than organ donation rates. There are currently more than 56 000 patients waiting for a suitable donor organ within the European Union. There are large differences in practices and results among Member States.

In the field of organ donation and transplantation in particular, there is huge potential for sharing experience and expertise among EU Member States.

On 31 May 2007, the Commission adopted a [Communication on organ donation and transplantation](#). This Communication and the Impact Assessment accompanying made a number of suggestions for actions at Community and Member State levels designed to help increase the supply of organ donors across the EU and ensure the quality and safety of these procedures.

The Communication proposed a **dual mechanism of action**: an Action Plan enhancing active coordination and cooperation between Member States complemented by a legal instrument containing the basic quality and safety principles (a [Directive on the standards and quality of safety of human organs intended for transplantation](#)).

Following the adoption of this first Communication, the Commission started a process of consultation with national experts and key stakeholders with the focus on the quality and safety requirements of human organ donation and transplantation and key priority areas for the proposed action plan. This consultation process enabled the Commission to identify 10 priority actions, which are grouped under three challenges:

- increasing organ availability
- enhancing the efficiency and accessibility of transplantation systems
- improving quality and safety.

CONTENT: this Action Plan aims at **reinforcing the cooperation between Member States**, through the identification and development of common objectives and guidelines, jointly-agreed indicators and benchmarks, regular reporting, and identification and sharing of best practices.

Actions at Community level will complement Member States' efforts to improve the quality and safety of organ donation and transplantation, combat the organ shortage problem and make transplantation systems more efficient. Through the utilization of Community tools, especially the Health Programme 2008-2013, the Commission will provide assistance to the Member States.

This Action Plan sets out 10 priority actions to help Member States address the challenges in the field of organ donation and transplantation. It will promote strengthened cooperation between Member States and exchange of best practices as a key element in the strategy. This cooperation process must be based on the identification and development of common objectives and guidelines, jointly-agreed quantitative and qualitative indicators and benchmarks and identification and sharing of best practices. On the basis of

these actions Member States should develop their own sets of **National Priority Actions**. The Action plan will provide the basis for an overall evaluation of the success Member States have in achieving the common objectives. A mid-term review of the actions will be carried out in 2012 to evaluate the efficacy of this action plan.

The 10 priority actions are as follows:

- **Priority action 1:** promote the role of transplant donor coordinators in every hospital where there is potential for organ donation. Member States should aim to incorporate in their Sets of National Priority Actions the objective of gradually appointing **Transplant Donor Coordinators** in all hospitals where there is potential for organ donation. The Commission could have a coordinating and monitoring role in this respect
- **Priority action 2:** promote Quality Improvement Programmes in every hospital where there is potential for organ donation. These programmes are primarily a self evaluation of the whole process of organ donation according to the characteristics of the hospital and the health system. These will make it possible to compare results and thus to pinpoint areas for improvement.
- **Priority Action 3:** exchange of best practices on living donation programmes among EU Member States. The Action Plan aims to promote altruistic donation programmes and the development of registration practices regarding living donors in order to guarantee their safety. The Commission will help to develop adequate tools to facilitate the proper collection of information on the medical, psychological, financial and social consequences of a living donation. **Registers of living donors** should be established to facilitate monitoring and follow-up.
- **Priority Action 4:** improve the knowledge and communication skills of health professionals and patient support groups on organ transplantation. Awareness campaigns should include information regarding the rights citizens and patients have concerning organ donation and transplantation in different Member States. The Commission can actively contribute by helping Member States to collect this kind of information.
- **Priority Action 5:** facilitate the identification of organ donors across Europe and cross-border donation in Europe. The Commission will help Member States to develop identification mechanisms.
- **Priority Action 6:** enhancing the organisational models of organ donation and transplantation in the EU Member States. Member States should aim to establish, in close collaboration with the Commission, a common set of indicators to monitor organ policy and a methodology to evaluate the potential in each Member State. The Action Plan further encourages Member States to promote the twinning of projects and peer review programmes.
- **Priority Action 7:** promote EU-wide agreements on aspects of transplantation medicine. A cooperation method is the ideal context in which to discuss issues of mutual concern and come up with common solutions and monitoring mechanisms. For instance, Member States are advised to establish such EU-wide agreements to deal with all aspects concerning transplant medicine for extra-Community patients.
- **Priority Action 8:** facilitate the interchange of organs between national authorities. Particularly for **urgent patients and difficult to treat patients**. An IT tool to support this action could be designed with guidance from the Commission and Community funding. Moreover, the Commission will support the Member States in the development of a structured system for exchanges of surplus organs between them.
- **Priority Action 9:** evaluation of post-transplant results. Evaluating post-transplant results through common definitions of terms and methodology could help to promote EU-wide registers, if necessary, and create a methodology to compare the results of existing post-transplant follow-up registers of organ recipients.
- In an effort to increase the pool of organs available for transplantation, the use of expanded donors (donors that from a medical point of view can only be considered for specific recipients under specific circumstances) should also be considered.

- **Priority Action 10:** promote a common accreditation system for organ donation/procurement and transplantation programmes and support centres of excellence. The Action Plan seeks to develop a methodology that could support the EU legal framework in order for Member States to accredit programmes on organ donation, procurement and transplantation. These objectives and priority actions are set out under the three challenges mentioned above. In turn, the Action Plan divides each priority action into various actions enumerated in Annex. Each Member State will decide what action and measures need to be taken in order to achieve the objectives. These will be included in their Sets of National Priority Actions, which should serve as a platform for discussion, exchange of expertise, and identification of best practices in the framework of this Action Plan. The Sets of National Priority Actions should be country-specific and tailored to the specific situation of each Member State.