

Why the Eurotransplant cooperation works

Trust, solidarity and scientific interest

The Eurotransplant International Foundation started as a group of medical scientists that decided more than 50 years ago that cooperation in the area of organ donation and –transplantation would benefit patients.

By “pooling” donor organs, making use of a central waiting list and by continuously working together on the development of evidence- and expert opinion based allocation rules, the different scientists and thus their respective countries experienced an additional value from this European cooperation. The results of organ transplantation within the Eurotransplant countries are widely recognized as leading. There are three values that form the basis of this success: trust, solidarity and scientific interest.

Trust in the cooperation was necessary in order to have the different transplant centers offer the donor organs retrieved from deceased persons to the central Eurotransplant donor pool. This required putting donor organs in the central pool and trusting that one day a suitable donor organ would be received in return.

Also *solidarity* was required so that scientists would offer a donor organ to the pool instead of giving it to their own sick patients. They accepted that patients that who were even sicker, or had waited longer were to be served first.

Scientific interest leads to a situation where medical scientists regularly and critically evaluate their work and that of others to monitor scientific progress. Generally speaking there is a competitive atmosphere of critical appraisal of results presented. Since Eurotransplant functions in a transparent way, i.e. disappointing results in a specific center lead to critical questions from others, as wasting a scarce donor organ affects all patients waiting within Eurotransplant.

It is interesting to notice that countries that contemplate joining Eurotransplant often experience resistance specifically from some members of the medical community. When going into this it is heard that these doctors do not like to give away their authority in deciding who gets an organ and who does not. Furthermore, donor organs not used for transplantation so far might well be accepted by doctors within Eurotransplant, this questioning the native doctors decision.

Even so, there is currently interest from several former Eastern European countries to cooperate with Eurotransplant. This helps them assure the quality of transplantation medicine and makes them a more actively cooperating member of the European Community.