

PRESS RELEASE

Organ donation crash Those affected call for a round table

On the occasion of Organ Donation Day on 4 June 2022, the German **ProTransplant** initiative appeals in an open letter to the Federal Minister of Health, Karl Lauterbach, and the Ministers of Health of the federal states to convene a **round table** as soon as possible. The reason for this is the **continuing low** in organ donation figures. The German Foundation for Organ Transplantation (DSO) reported a further **dramatic drop of 29%** for the first quarter of 2022 compared to the same period last year (Fig.). A total of 21 patient* organisations signed the letter.

"Despite many successful campaigns and a steadily increasing willingness to donate among the population, we are experiencing another disaster. A **new negative record** was set in the first quarter of 2022. We — the affected, seriously ill fellow citizens — are horrified and desperate. This development is shameful and unacceptable. The Europe-wide comparison reveals a German systemic failure. For us, everything is at stake: **being allowed to live or having to die**", emphasises Mario Rosa-Bian, Chairman of I.G. Niere NRW e.V.

"It needs a new start"

The initiators criticise that responsibility is being shifted back and forth between the federal and state governments, between hospitals, umbrella organisations and the German Foundation for Organ Transplantation (DSO). Their request to politicians: "Take heart. **Bring all those involved to the table.** Organ donation needs a big check-up. It needs a **new start.**"

From ProTransplant's point of view, in addition to those affected, the Federal Ministry of Health and the Ministries of Health of the Länder should be involved:

- the transplantation commissioners,
- the Patient Representative of the Federal Government,
- the German Transplantation Society (DTG),
- the DSO,
- the German Medical Association (BÄK),
- the German Hospital Association (DKG),
- the German Society for Nephrology (DGfN),
- the German Society for Surgery (DGCH),
- the German Society for Thoracic, Cardiac and Vascular Surgery (DGTHG),
- the German Society of Urology (DGU),
- the German Interdisciplinary Association for Intensive and Emergency Medicine (DIVI),
- the German National Association of Health Insurance Funds (GKV Spitzenverband),
- the ProTransplant initiative.

Declining numbers despite increasing readiness

The members of the initiative report that in 2019, "after bitter years of regression", they briefly felt hopeful: All political parties had been determined to significantly improve the situation of patients waiting for organ donation and had promised that the new laws would take effect in the following years. However, the effect has failed to materialise to date. **For 15 years, the number of organ transplants in Germany has been falling**, while the willingness to donate has been steadily increasing. "If the previous transplant legislation were the patient, one would have to diagnose: Out of treatment! The only thing left to do is: organ donation needs a new heart!", ProTransplant concludes.

The causes are also named. According to the report, **many potential organ donors are not recognised and reported**. The hospitals' commitment remains "far below the possibilities", it says. In addition, the law **to strengthen the willingness to make decisions** had already **failed** when it came into force on 1 March 2022. "Nobody could or wanted to imagine what is now reality: the catastrophic conditions have turned into a **disaster**, a crash. Patient carers report that they are stopping their work because they can no longer offer hope. At the moment, the only useful advice for those affected is to leave Germany", is the bitter conclusion of Peter Schlauderer, Verein Lebertransplantierte Deutschland.

Waiting time for a kidney: Switzerland 3, Germany 10 years

The authors of the letter also refer to **Switzerland**, where the **opt-out regulation** is now being introduced on the basis of the recent **referendum**. A waiting period of **3 years** for a **kidney** was one of the decisive factors. In **Germany**, it is **currently 10 years** — longer than the average life expectancy for many patients who need dialysis. The initiators are convinced that an opt-out regulation is an **indispensable building block for success**.

They emphatically ask the responsible health politicians: "Stop this unilateral action, stop the **unnecessary, silent death of thousands of patients** in Germany!"

To the open letter:



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