The ERA-EDTA Registry’s Anniversary: 
Trends in Dialysis and Transplantation in 
Europe with a Focus on the Netherlands

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This year the European Renal Association – European Dialysis and Transplant Association (ERA-EDTA) Registry, that collects data on dialysis and kidney transplant patients from 31 European countries for public health and research purposes, celebrates its 50th anniversary.

During those 50 years dialysis and kidney transplantation have developed from experimental into regular treatments. As a result Europe has witnessed a tremendous increase in the number of patients starting these treatments for advanced chronic kidney disease and now more than half a million patients are alive thanks to dialysis or a functioning kidney transplant. At the same time the patient population has changed from young and relatively healthy patients into elderly people with a substantial number of co-morbidities.

Even after correction for general population size patient numbers differ across Europe: those in Portugal are almost threefold of those in Finland and even tenfold of those in Ukraine, whereas The Netherlands takes a middle position. The Registry investigates the factors underlying these differences.

To reduce the numbers of patients starting renal replacement therapy and the related high costs, public health initiatives aimed at prevention of kidney disease (for example through reduction of diabetes, hypertension and obesity) are essential. If despite these efforts patients develop advanced kidney disease kidney transplantation is the treatment of first choice, as then they survive longer and achieve a better quality of life compared to dialysis.

Thanks to an active policy to increase the number of living kidney donors The Netherlands now has the highest number of performed kidney transplants in Europe, after Norway. Unfortunately, efforts to increase the number of available kidneys from deceased kidney donors have been less successful. As a result many patients who would benefit from a donor kidney are still on the waiting list for transplantation, not only in The Netherlands but in most European countries.