



ERA — EDTNA/ERCA — EKHA — EKPF response to the consultation on the EU prevention, preparedness and response plan for health crises

The European Renal Association (ERA), the European Dialysis and Transplant Nurses Association/European Renal Care Association (EDTNA/ERCA), the European Kidney Health Alliance (EKHA) and the European Kidney Patients Federation (EKPF) welcome the EU prevention, preparedness, and response plan for cross-border health crises and call on the EU to ensure that care for people living with chronic kidney disease (CKD) (especially those receiving kidney replacement therapy (KRT) including dialysis or transplant) is adequately included. Major crises such as pandemics, climate-related emergencies, terrorist attacks and armed conflicts can severely disrupt the care that people with CKD rely on to survive.

CKD affects around 10% of Europe's adult population. As recently recognised by the WHO in its kidney health resolution, CKD is the fastest growing cause of mortality, projected to be the third leading cause in Western Europe by 2050. More than 400.000 Europeans depend on regular dialysis to stay alive and around 350.000 receive transplant follow-up. These individuals are among the most medically vulnerable: often immunocompromised, dependent on complex treatment regimens that cannot be interrupted, and requiring frequent healthcare contact. The COVID-19 pandemic underscored this vulnerability, with dialysis patients experiencing disproportionately high mortality due to treatment interruptions, medicine shortages, and increased infection risks. Transplant recipients also remain at heightened risk during any healthcare system disruption.

KRT critically depends on uninterrupted access to clean water, electricity, trained staff, sterile consumables, transport, and life-sustaining medications. A disruption can have immediate life-threatening consequences. Recent cyberattacks on European hospitals paralysed dialysis services by disabling scheduling systems, e-prescriptions, and patient records. In conflict zones such as Ukraine, dialysis services were initially disrupted, with patients displaced internally and across borders, many left for days without access to urgent care. This highlights the need of coordinated cross-border systems to ensure care continuity, data tracking and survival.

Despite the high stakes, resilience in kidney care remains limited. Some dialysis centres lack backup infrastructure for power and water. Supply chains are fragile and highly



centralised. No centralised platform exists for real-time patient tracking or resource sharing. This gap poses a major barrier to coordinated crisis response and contingency planning.

To ensure the protection of kidney patients during cross-border health emergencies, ERA, EDTNA/ERCA, EKHA and EKPF recommend that the EU:

1. Recognises dialysis and transplantation services as essential health services, with mandates to maintain continuity of care during crises.
2. Establishes EU-wide minimum standards for service continuity, including infrastructure for backup water and electricity, surge staffing, and crisis-mode operations.
3. Develops secure, interoperable patient registries to enable rapid cross-border coordination and continuity of care.
4. Invests in diversified, climate-resilient supply chains and maintains strategic stockpiles of dialysis- and transplantation-specific medications, consumables, and portable treatment systems.
5. Funds joint training exercises for nephrology professionals, emergency responders, and public health authorities to ensure preparedness.
6. Facilitates mutual-aid agreements and real-time communication protocols between Member States to support displaced or at-risk kidney patients.

People with CKD cannot afford gaps in care. Excluding this vulnerable group from crisis planning risks needless suffering and preventable deaths. The ERA, through its Kidney Relief in Disasters Task Force, stands ready to contribute data, technical expertise, and a robust Europe-wide network to strengthen crisis preparedness and response strategies for all people affected by kidney disease.