



SUPPORT TO UKRAINE FOR DEVELOPING A MODERN PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM

A project funded by the European Union and implemented by a consortium consisting of GFA Consulting Group GmbH, Hamburg, and the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, Helsinki. The project supports consolidation and empowerment of the Public Health Centre of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine (UPHC) and supports the establishment of a modern blood safety system in Ukraine.

Project Newsletter

June 2022



Martin Schroeder, Head of Local and Human Development at the European Union Delegation to Ukraine

Since Russia's renewed unprovoked, unjustified, and brutal attack on Ukraine on 24 February 2022, the life of all Ukrainians has changed dramatically. The ongoing war is causing civilian deaths and injuries, as well as severe damages to homes, educational and health facilities daily. Having lived in Ukraine for almost eight years, the events of the past weeks have been particularly shocking and painful, and my daily thoughts are with friends and colleagues, and all Ukrainians. The European Union, Ukraine's strategic partner for more than 30 years now, has redoubled its efforts to assist Ukrainians and the Ukrainian government to overcome the daily consequences of the war.

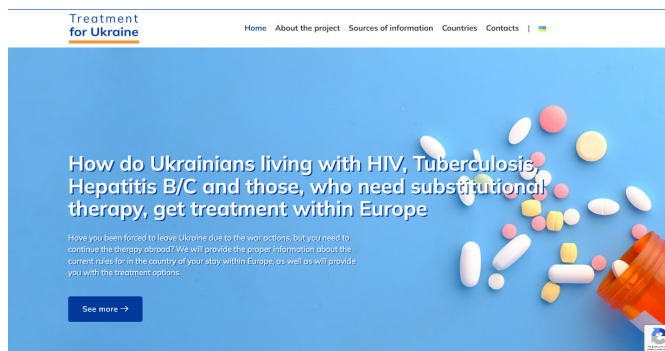
This particularly applies to the humanitarian aid and healthcare support for those 7.7 million people who were internally displaced within the country as well as for those 6.5 million people who have been forced to flee their homes to move abroad. The project "Support to Ukraine for Developing a Modern Public Health System" works in close cooperation with the Ministry of Health and we have jointly identified healthcare support to Ukrainian citizens abroad as a critical need to address. To cover the information gap on the healthcare facilities in other European countries serving people living with HIV, TB, hepatitis B and C, and for people on substitutional therapy, we launched an information campaign via the special website treatment4ukraine.com. This platform is supposed to be a guide and a source of verified, clear and accurate information for each Ukrainian who leaves Ukraine to other European countries on where he/she can go for treatment of a specific disease and/ or condition, under which circumstances the treatment can be provided and what is the additional support available. The EU Delegation to Ukraine aims at ensuring that Ukrainians forced to leave their country are protected and secure within the EU Member States they are

staying in, and our team foresees such a platform as a long-term support to get across information on proper treatment options.

The cooperation between the EU and Ukraine, lasting for decades, was recently bolstered further by Ukraine's application for EU membership, signed in February 2022 by Ukrainian President Zelensky. I sincerely hope

that this terrible war will come to an end soon and I am convinced that Ukraine will emerge from it as an even stronger modern and democratic country that has fought hard to take its deserved place in the heart of Europe. In the meantime, the EU will continuously support Ukraine in overcoming the current hardships and to direct all our efforts and resources available to rebuild Ukraine and help it grow.

Information campaign for Ukrainians forced to move abroad



The war in Ukraine, which was started on February 24, 2022, by the Russian Federation, has caused the worst migration crisis since WWII in Europe. According to UNHCR, over 6,5 million of Ukrainians were forced to flee their home country seeking a safer place to stay within other European countries. Also, 7,7 million of Ukrainians are internally displaced within the country. As a response to the situation, the EU Delegation to Ukraine together with the partners came up with an initiative to support Ukrainians in the public health field by providing detailed information via the special

website "Treatment for Ukraine":
www.treatment4ukraine.com.

The main purpose of this website is to provide complete and accurate information about the availability of healthcare in Europe for Ukrainians who were forced to leave Ukraine. Specific information is provided for Ukrainians who live with HIV, hepatitis, tuberculosis, and those who are relying on opioid antagonist therapy. A team of the international experts, in cooperation with Ukrainian partners, strived to collect relevant information available in public resources, including official websites of ministries, institutions and international organisations, and associations, along with contacting relevant actors.

This campaign and this resource, in a long-term perspective are supposed to be a reliable tool for all Ukrainians seeking treatment options abroad due to the forced migration.

The set of surveys on COVID-19 experience and healthcare workers competences were conducted

In autumn 2021 – winter 2021, the team conducted a survey of four different subgroups of health workers of their experience of the COVID-19 response in Ukraine. The key objectives for this report were to determine the training needs of UPHC and partners including public health workers, laboratory workers, communication specialists and carers for COVID-19 patients, for communicable disease surveillance and control, both, with a view to COVID-19 epidemic, and in preparation for future epidemics. Having conducted qualitative interviews, experts came up with the following recommendations:

- ← improve collaborative working style, also including rayon and oblast levels. This should not be limited to courses, but also include field epidemiology training, simulation exercises and particularly the involvement of oblast and rayon level;
- ← training of staff on all levels, including field epidemiology training and the already defined training needs. The training plan as designed should be further reviewed by the training task force, and adapted to the new needs considering war actions in the country;
- ← focusing on non-communicable and mental health issues as well – in order to restore health services with and after the current events, there's a necessity to refocus services to needs that have not been targeted with the current crisis;
- ← training skills how to deal with social media and difficult subpopulations, like the antivaccination movement – it is recommended to start working on epidemic preparedness on a national level developing training needs in this way.

Additionally, during winter 2021/22, the assessment of core competencies in vaccine-preventable diseases and immunisation (VPD&I) was conducted. Competencies are critical for the whole workforce,

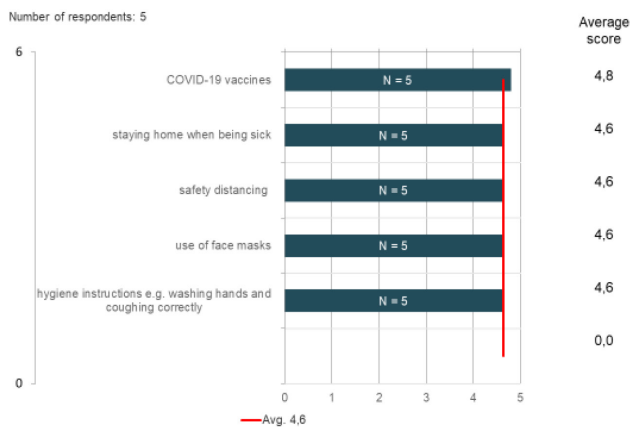
development of function-specific competencies and their use in assessments will help ensure that the people performing those functions possess the necessary skills and not just the title. The results of the assessment provides evidence of the progress in implementing a consistent, science-based approach to public health, and serves as a tool for lobbying and political decision-making related to reforming and strengthening public health services in Ukraine.

According to the assessment, it is recommended that the Government of Ukraine and its development partners strengthen the senior management team through systematic capacity building and performance improvement approaches, meaning that the key training topics must include management and supervisory skills, leadership capabilities and technical updates. In the policy and decision-making field, recommendations are to use the best evidence and data through a process that is led in-country and additionally, to adapt information and experiences from other countries and international communities and organisations such as WHO, ECDC, or NICE. Specific research projects may be initiated to answer policy questions. This effort needs systematic training of staff in evidence-based medicine, critical thinking and searching for evidence. Another significant issue is that “communicating for vaccination” should be upgraded using social media tools and lessons learnt from commercial and social marketing efforts, including new mobile and Internet-based technologies, and support of communication research. And finally, it was highlighted that institutionalisation of annual self-assessments would be effective to measure staff capacity and identify areas for staff support in a long-term perspective.

Hence, all the recommendations listed will ultimately contribute to improving the quality of services delivery to the country's population.

Key recommendations on COVID-19 communication

4. How important it is to communicate on the following COVID-19 related topics currently? (on a scale of: 1 not important at all - 5 extremely important)



The evaluation of COVID-19 communication activities was an important part of the above mentioned COVID-19 experience survey held during Autumn 2021-winter 2022 with the communication professionals of the PHC and regional Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (rCDCs).

The findings of the survey resulted in the report that presents multiple viewpoints to good crisis communications in general and highlights the most relevant themes specific to the COVID-19 pandemic response with the aim at providing a deeper understanding of crisis communication strategies implemented in the context of COVID-19 communications in Ukraine.

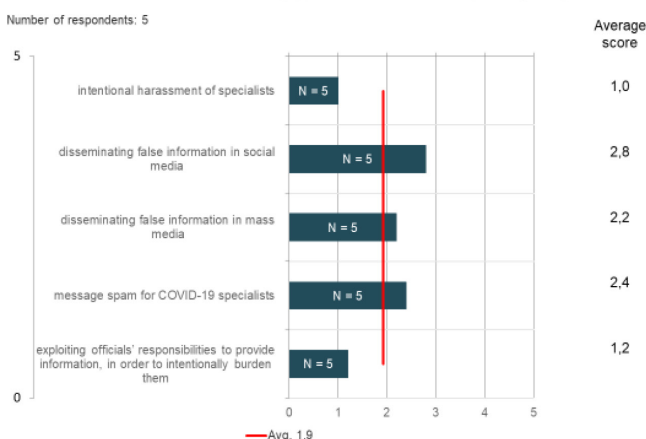
This survey was a combination of two approaches – the online questionnaire containing multiple choice and open-ended questions for 25 rCDCs and qualitative interviews to get the deeper overview of the communication activities during the COVID-19

pandemic and possible challenges caused by this crisis. Yet, comprehensive data collection was interrupted due to the Russian invasion and the military actions in most of the regions of Ukraine, therefore findings represent interesting individual viewpoints but can unfortunately not be generalised.

Based on the interviews and survey responses, the regions have implemented and tested a wide variety of different communications activities such as using multi-media approach, engaging stakeholders, the use of international resources and comprehensive collaboration with the media. Due to the limited number of replies and lack of information regarding the budget and other details, it remains impossible to evaluate the effectiveness of the activities, however.

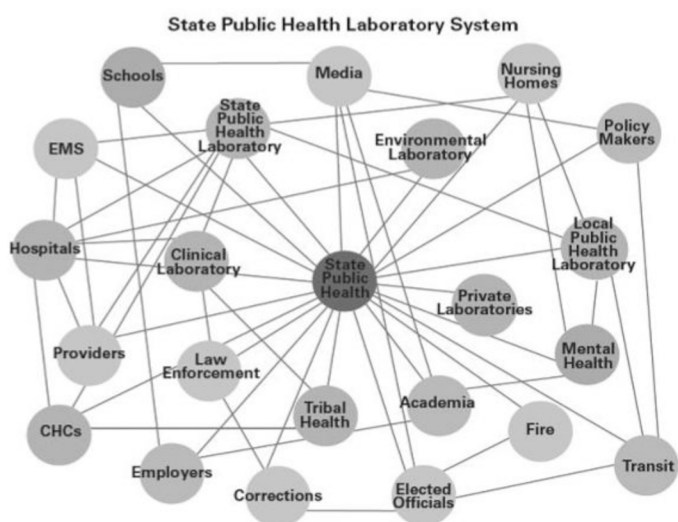
The key recommendation by the survey was to strengthen cooperation between the regions and between the regions and the national level.

5. How notable have been these following types of disinformation in your region? (on a scale of: 1 not relevant at all - 5 extremely notable)



International laboratory practices: opportunities for growth and development for Ukraine

Figure 2. State Public Health Laboratory System partners as depicted in the APHL State Public Health Laboratory System



Upon UPHC request, the project prepared a review of international practices as well as recommendations towards the development of laboratory networks in Ukraine.

The key points that emerged were:

← **Standards and frameworks for laboratory network developments.** At this stage, the establishment of a Core Group for the

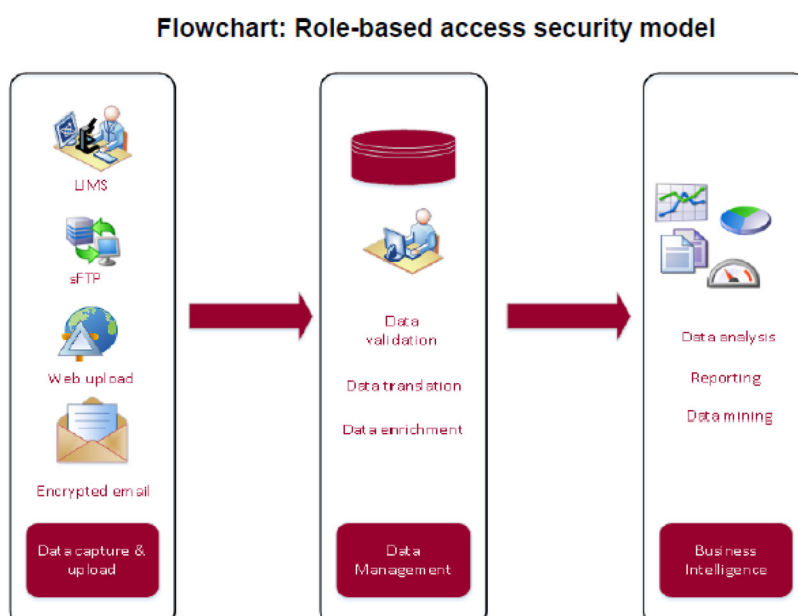
development of a laboratory strategic plan is important following international organisations' guidance, for example WHO. Leadership has been identified as the key issue for successful and sustainable network development as well as sustainable long-term financing

← **Key areas of work for laboratory networks** include the abovementioned strategic plan, as well as systems for laboratory networks, reflecting epidemiological needs of the population followed by the analysis of existing laboratories (public and private) and an analysis of their capacity including human resources and quality assurance;

← **Examples for national and regional laboratory networks.** In this regard, the quality management and related systems need to be implemented in the national laboratory plan, and followed up, through monitoring and evaluation, by the entire network;

← **Further analysis of laboratory networks** using implementation research methods and considering the integration in regional laboratory networks is suggested, for example those networks linked to the ECDC and others.

Figure 3. Data collection and surveillance system for laboratories in the United Kingdom



Recommendations for the development of Terms of Reference for a Ukrainian biosafety and biosecurity committee

National Biosafety and Biosecurity Committees are supposed to ensure high-quality oversight on a national level for biosafety and biosecurity, but also to liaise on implementation with institutional biosafety and biosecurity committees.

The biosafety and biosecurity agenda of the national committee can only be implemented with an efficient and resilient network of institutional biosafety and biosecurity committees that includes public health, reference, clinical and other laboratories and comprising private and public laboratories. The development of such a network and its capacity is considered a primary responsibility of the National

Biosafety and Biosecurity Committee in the MoH.

The project prepared the recommendations towards the development of ToRs for a National Biosafety and Biosecurity Committee in Ukraine, with the example of international standards and examples.

The process for the final development of adaptation of the ToRs should go hand in hand with the creation of the National Biosafety and Biosecurity Committee. Detailed guidance for this process is available through the WHO publication "On implementing regulatory requirements for biosafety and biosecurity in biomedical laboratories: a stepwise approach".

The Roadmap for NCDs was developed

One of the priority areas for the Project is improving the non-communicable disease monitoring system in Ukraine. Road mapping is nowadays recognised as an important strategic planning tool to forecast both the critical development needs and the steps required to reach major advances in an area, and thus provides a valuable tool for decision-making. The developed roadmap intends to help operationalising the already

agreed frameworks and strategies for responding to NCDs in ways that are affordable and cost-effective. It addresses principal issues required for rolling-out activities on national and regional levels, aims to strengthen essential population level, people-centred public health functions and institutions for effective prevention and control of NCDs including palliative care, and to promote mental health and wellbeing.

Active participation in the European Public Health Week

This year's European Public Health week, "Health throughout the life course" which was celebrated May 16-20, raised critical issues in the public health field. A series of diverse webinars united thousands of public health professionals around Europe.

The Project's international Senior Non-Key expert Jesus Perez Formigo conducted a presentation on monitoring and responding to threats in public health during martial law to highlight the importance of building a resilient health system during the war times. The key elements highlighted in the presentation were:

✦ Introduction to International Health Regulations

(2005), its basic capabilities and WHO surveillance;

✦ Epidemiological Intelligence, its structure, core role, and activities which are defined as the process of detection, filtering, verification, analysis, evaluation and investigation of those events or situations that may represent a threat to public health.

The topics discussed were aimed at informing healthcare professionals in Ukraine about the possible threats and crisis situations in public health in wartime and at equipping them with the tools to detect the emergencies timely and to recommend public health measures for prevention or overcoming the crisis.

Donor recruitment during wartime: overview by Iryna Slavinska, SNKE in health promotion, CEO of DonorUA

With the beginning of the Russian invasion, the emphasis shifted to donor recruitment and improvement of the digital service. Since February 24, volunteers at blood centers across the country have taken care for donors almost 24/7 and coordinated donors who stood for hours in front of blood centers waiting for the opportunity to donate blood.

Obviously, there was a need for coordination in place and timely informing donors about who can donate blood. DonorUA, as the organisation that has long been working on the topic of recruitment and coordination of donors, initiated cooperation with the state to automate the process of recruitment and donation planning. Thus, DonorUA was recognised as the only platform that covers the need for donor planning and recruitment in Ukraine.

From the beginning of March 2022, the Headquarters for Blood System Issues under the MOH governance was formed. It was possible to centrally communicate and control important processes of humanitarian aid delivery, needs collection and blood transportation. All communication also takes place through the Headquarters regarding the forced relocation of blood center employees who have been destroyed or partially damaged.

The organisations working in the field of blood donation and blood centers were not allowed to publish specific data on blood needs in the social networks, so almost the entire recruitment process relied on the electronic system of DonorUA. Today, the invitations to blood donors are sent automatically, so the donor is able to plan the donation and can easily come to the blood center.

There is always a space for optimisation in terms of management and coordination between the regional blood centers and MOH, but in general communication during the crisis was successful and effective. Good collaboration is especially relevant for a situation where

the blood units need to distribute donated blood and its components throughout the country rapidly.

It is worth noting that during the first two months of the war, the number of registrations doubled. However, even despite such a significant increase of the blood donors, the DonorUA team managed to close needs and coordinate the planning process.

The only challenge so far is to set up a recruitment process through an electronic system with blood centers. Since the path of finding a donor has been and still is through the patient, it has the following consequences:

- ✦ Donors who are the relatives to the patients;
- ✦ Donors coming only once;
- ✦ Threat of infectious unsafety.

Therefore, we see that the recruitment automation solution is effective, and we are grateful to the Ministry of Health for its support and invitation for the donors to register in the reserve platform through the DonorUA system which is guiding donors to the blood units once blood is requested. This made the process simple, clear, and secure. It also worth to underline that the staff members of the blood centers are true heroes living in the blood centers and ensuring uninterrupted supply of all necessary blood components across the country. These people worked and are still working amidst explosions, and they symbolise the courage and bravery of the Ukrainian people. And we would like to express our gratitude to them, as well as to the donors who save lives.

We say "Thank you" (<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=5405551292840946&ref=sharing>) on this World Blood Donors Day to everyone who is saving lives.



Iryna Soroka

Acting Deputy Head of the
Public Health Center of
Ukraine

IN COOPERATION WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES FROM THE PHC DEPARTMENT OF BEHAVIORAL RISK FACTORS, YOU ARE WORKING ON A STRATEGY ON NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES (NCDs) COUNTERACTION. COULD YOU PLEASE GIVE MORE DETAILS ABOUT THE PLANS AND WHAT, IN ADDITION TO THE STRATEGY, IS EXPECTED TO BE DONE ON NCDs FOR THE NEXT FEW YEARS?

Non-communicable diseases represent a serious public health problem. NCDs, mainly cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer, and chronic respiratory diseases, are the cause of most deaths and are a significant burden on the socio-economic development of our country, as well as many other countries in Europe and around the world.

Ukraine is undergoing a transitional epidemiological period with an increasing burden of NCDs and their risk factors. Over 80% of all deaths in Ukraine, and more than 80% of years lost due to premature death and disability are caused by NCDs as the Ministry of Health data shows.

Non-communicable diseases are chronic and incurable, but available data suggest that these diseases can be largely prevented through effective interventions to address their common risk factors and key social determinants. In addition, early detection and proper treatment of such diseases can reduce morbidity and premature death, as well as improve quality of life.

At the global level, the response of the world to the NCD challenge is represented by the European Health and Wellness Policy 2020, the European Action Plan on Capacity Building and Public Health Services, and the Action Plan on the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases in the WHO European Region for 2016-2025, the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (2003), the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health (2004), the WHO Global Plan of Action to Increase Physical Activity for 2018- 2030, and many more.

By signing the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union, the European Atomic Energy Community, and its Member States, (Chapter 22. Public Health), Ukraine has committed itself to developing health cooperation, aimed at increasing the level of security and protection of human health as a prerequisite for sustainable development and economic growth guided by the approach "health care in all state policies".

Now, the state is working on the implementation of Chapter 22 of the Association Agreement between

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Ukraine and the EU, in particular through the implementation of reforms, further development of primary health care and staff training; prevention and control of NCDs, including the exchange of information and best practices, the promotion of healthy lifestyle, the identification of key determinants of health and health problems; and sharing information and knowledge in the field of health care.

Reaffirming our country's commitment to the principles of the Political Declaration of the UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on Strengthening Health Systems and Achieving the Global Strategy's Goals of Reducing Premature Mortality and Improving Quality of Life, Ukraine supports the European Health Policy 2020: Fundamentals of European Policy in Support of State and Society Action for Health and Well-Being", European Action Plan for Capacity Building and Public Health Services. In addition to that, 10 main operational functions of public health as a tool for the actions on national and regional levels aimed at building / developing the public health system in Ukraine and strengthening its capacity were identified.

The National action plan on non-communicable diseases, approved by order of the Cabinet of Ministers of July 26, 2018, is the main legal act that helps Ukraine increase public awareness of risk factors for noncommunicable diseases; reduction of premature deaths from non-communicable diseases (cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases, etc.). The implementation of efforts is aimed at combating the main risks of NCDs that are behavioural: smoking, alcohol consumption, unhealthy diet, low physical activity.

Creating a safe environment for the population, ensuring a high life expectancy and healthy life expectancy have become strategic goals of the National Economic Strategy until 2030, approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on March 3, 2021 N° 179.

The Law of Ukraine of 16.12.2021 N° 1978-IX "On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine on Public Health Protection from the Harmful Effects of Tobacco" regulates the concept of tobacco

products, medical warning to consumers of tobacco products, strengthens requirements for production, sale, advertising and use tobacco products and electronic cigarettes, as well as the introduction of fines for smoking hookahs, electronic cigarettes and tobacco products for electric heating in public places and catering establishments, railway stations, airports (except for designated areas), dormitories, hotels, businesses of all forms of ownership . The implementation of the law will help reduce the prevalence of smoking at any age, especially among children and youth. Ukraine has pledged to reduce smoking to 15% by 2025. Such measures will gradually contribute to improving the health of the population and increasing life expectancy in Ukraine.

Therefore, the strategic goals have been set, the action plan in certain areas is there, the responsible parties for the implementation of measures have been identified, and that remains left is to implement them. At this stage, the issue of coordination and intersectoral cooperation between involved parties arises. Based on such considerations and to unite efforts, understand the degree of involvement of all partners in achieving the goals as well as to identify gaps in all areas of combating NCDs, the Public Health Center initiated a strategic planning session to identify priority areas for cooperation in prevention and control of non-communicable diseases in Ukraine for 2022. With the support of the Ukrainian-Swiss project "Action for Health" on January 20-21, 2022, we managed to do it. The hard work of the Ministry of Health, the Center for Public Health, UNICEF, WHO, and the EU project has resulted in a consolidated action plan for 2022. The issue of developing a national strategy to combat NCDs was achieved. But Russia's military aggression against our country has made adjustments into our plans for the NCD policy, therefore revision of this process will be essential in the nearest future.

Our plans for the next one-two years include awareness-raising activities in line with the Global Dates and International Health Awareness Days. We are working on the development of an online platform and a mobile application for citizens to to identify violations of anti-tobacco legislation in the field of

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"Communications and Social Mobilisation". Another significant activity is the development of a "Pocket Book" for the National Police on the necessary actions to identify violations of tobacco control legislation to bring violators to justice; conducting trainings for the National Police on response to violations of tobacco control legislation; development of materials on tobacco use and requirements of anti-tobacco legislation for lectures in general secondary education institutions.

In the area of "Strategic Data" we are determined to develop and present public health profiles for the regions and the national level. Then, there are plans to establish a public health information fund - a state information resource that contains data on the state of health, well-being of the population and indicators of the living environment, and an assessment of risks and vulnerabilities of the population to climate change. Several research directions were discussed:

- Prevalence of childhood obesity;
- Global Adult Tobacco Survey;
- Global Youth Tobacco Survey;
- Sociological research "Health and behavioural orientations of young people and students";
- Research of the actual state of nutrition of the population depending on age, sex;
- Assessment of the dependence of food quality on social determinants (the level of education, income, place of residence, etc).

Additionally, the cooperation with regional CDCs in a couple of areas is planned: updating regional action plans for NCDs; creation of Knowledge Centers (NCD HUBs) in 5 pilot regions within the Project "Act4Health"; creation of information packages to promote healthy lifestyles, Global Dates and International Disease Awareness Days; formation of the need for training of specialists of the Central Committee on Public Health; methodological support for the implementation of the requirements of the resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "Some issues of state monitoring in the field of air protection".

As a conclusion, the advocacy and support of the approval of several legal acts in NCDs is expected:

- National Strategy of Ukraine to Reduce the Harmful Impact of Alcohol on Public Health until 2030" and the Operational Plan for the Implementation of the Strategy for the period until 2022-2024;
- Order of the Ministry of Health "Guidelines for health care workers -prophylactic care for people who want to stop tobacco addiction";
- The draft law on amendments to the Budget Code regarding the establishment of the Public Health Programs Fund and others.

WHAT WERE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT PHC HEALTHY LIFESTYLE ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS AND COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES ON NCDs OVER THE LAST 1-2 YEARS?

Advocacy and communication are among the main areas of work in the field of NCDs control and the impact on changing the behaviour of the population to reach its recovery increase.

PHC initiates and actively participates in the development of draft regulations on prevention and reduction of NCDs, and the formation of a healthy lifestyle. Among the most significant events, we would highlight the active advocacy for the adoption of the Law of Ukraine of 16.12.2021 № 1978-IX "On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine on Public Health Protection from Tobacco Exposure"; the development and approval of the order № 2205 of 25.09.2020 on the Sanitary Regulations for general secondary education by of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, which determines the rules and regulations of the educational process, nutrition, health care, requirements for premises and territory related to all types of general secondary education. Work on this document has lasted for several years.

Communication efforts are an everlasting, continuous process. The focus is on NCD risk factors, prevention, screening, and early detection of disease symptoms.

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We try to increase awareness on quality of life, rehabilitation after illness, touch on the elements of self-care and the participation of the close environment in reducing the burden of concomitant NCDs. As a rule, our communication efforts are synchronized with global or national dates to raise public awareness of certain non-communicable diseases. Whenever possible, such communication events are held in open areas and aim to get as close as possible to people by using individual and group classes, lectures, conversations, active forms of communication, and other means to establishing dialogue. Physical activity is a necessary element of such events. This kind of events are often organised with the technical support and active participation of our partners, including international ones. The last joyful event I want to mention is World Heart Day. The activities were held in Mariinsky Park.

An important form of communication with the target audience are webinars, articles, publications, and interviews, which constantly appear on our Internet resources. We try to work closely with primary care professionals, but we often involve experts in various areas of public health.

OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS, THE PHC TEAM, TOGETHER WITH THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND THE EU PROJECT EXPERTS, HAS DISCUSSED THE FUTURE WORK ON THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

- DEVELOPMENT OF A PLAN OF FISCAL MEASURES FOR TOBACCO PRODUCTS, ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES, ETC. ;
- IMPROVING LEGISLATION USING INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICES TO COMPLETELY BAN ADVERTISING AND OTHER INCENTIVES FOR HARMFUL PRODUCTS;
- ADAPTATION AND APPROVAL OF THE MODEL OF PROFILING OF SUBSTANCES IN FOOD PRODUCTS;
- DEVELOPMENT OF A METHODOLOGY FOR ASSESSING THE RISKS AND VULNERABILITIES OF THE POPULATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE.

IN YOUR OPINION, HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO BRING THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK OF UKRAINE ON THESE ISSUES CLOSER TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WHO AND THE EUROPEAN UNION? WHAT MEASURES CAN BE TAKEN TO PROMOTE REFORMS AND IDEAS OF A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE AMONG THE POPULATION OF UKRAINE?

The European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plan "Ukraine - European Union" was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on February 12, 2005. The speed of progress in relations depended entirely on Ukraine's efforts and concrete achievements in fulfilling its obligations regarding common values. This Action Plan was an important new step in the process of Ukraine's integration into the European community and covered a timeframe of three years.

We are now in the middle of 2022, and the approximation of Ukrainian legislation to the EU is on the plate again. Public health issues are related to many areas of life (education, social environment, economic conditions in the country, the state of the health care system and its ability to respond to human needs in basic health services and ensure their availability and quality, etc.). Therefore, changes in health legislation and the development of such acts in the field of public health entail several corresponding changes in the basic laws of other fields of public life. For example, public health is a component of social health, which is not possible without decent conditions of social security, housing, salaries, etc.

Another important issue about the timing is related to politicians and their decisions. The war helped us all look on the values of lives. We have shown how united the people and the government can be, and how quickly significant decisions can be made. The pace set by the Russian aggression will truly speed up the adoption of the relevant laws belonging to a peaceful life. And then NCD issues must remain a high priority.

THE EU PROJECT IS CURRENTLY ASSISTING PHC WITH TRANSLATIONS OF EU DIRECTIVES ON WATER QUALITY, AIR POLLUTION AND SAFETY

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RADIATION POLLUTION. WHAT OTHER SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE CAN BE USEFUL FOR THE PHC TO COVER THE NCD ISSUES, ESPECIALLY THOSE EXTREMELY RELEVANT DURING WARTIME?

At a time when the independence and sovereignty of our state is at stake, all the forces of society are aimed at resolutely repelling armed Russian aggression. NCD issues have given way to security and life-saving issues during hostilities. Therefore, in such conditions, we focused on those who are deprived of access to adequate medical care - internally displaced persons, people who are in a war zone and surrounding areas. The main task was to provide information on self-help for injuries, injuries and acute conditions of

non-communicable diseases. We do however not ignore the issues of reducing alcohol consumption, smoking, adherence to proper nutrition, food safety, stress management, prevention of available disease screening, identification of risk factors for NCDs, etc.

People with diabetes mellitus, cancer, hypertension, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, chronic renal failure and need hemodialysis need special attention in the absence of proper access to health care facilities.

We would be grateful for the choice of a certain line of assistance within the technical capabilities of the project.



Roman Lanskyi, Head of Digital Healthcare Office, Adviser to the Minister, MOH

HOW DID THE MOH MANAGE TO KEEP THE BLOOD DONORS MOBILISATION AND SCHEDULING FUNCTIONAL AFTER THE WAR STARTED? WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST NEEDS AND HOW WERE CRITICAL ISSUES SOLVED BY MOH AND UTCC TEAM?

The importance of the national blood system for the defence of the country is crucial and became evident in 2020 when the Law of Ukraine "On safety and quality of donor blood and blood components" was adopted and UTCC and MoH have been actively working on its implementation ever since. In autumn 2021 efforts have been made for the implementation of a serious IT component living up to the needs of the blood system. Therefore, on the first day of the war, realising that during hostilities it is hard to find a more critical component of healthcare than the blood system, the task was to properly mobilise all teams and participants. In fact, on February 24, I initiated the creation of the national blood system headquarters at the Ministry of Health, that coordinated the needs, in cooperation with colleagues from UTCC, MoH and its IT team, state enterprise "Medical procurement of Ukraine" and NGO DonorUA acting as a single body. The HQ coordinated all the activities starting from transfer of blood supplies between the centers up to the search for 240 kW generators.

The key problem was panic: "There is no blood, nowhere!", "A billion hemacons needed in Pavlograd!", "In two hours we need 40 trucks!", and likewise. It was critical to get reliable information about blood supplies, consumables and bring it together to clearly understand what are really the "burning" issues and where the situation is more about emotions.

In this way, the State enterprise "Medical procurement of Ukraine" provided valuable assistance, as with the help of the MedData system, it was possible to implement all the critical operations for the blood centers reporting within a week. The interesting fact is that those regions where active hostilities took place, despite the overload and constant threats to life, managed to provide the information faster than many "quiet" regions who complained about lack of time to complete a simple report of 30 positions.

When it is coming to donor recruitment, the number of donors was not a problem, people were standing in queues even under active shelling, and from my personal experience - even the presence of armed people in the blood center was not a reason for people to go away. The challenge was the queues, as people put themselves in danger, often unnecessarily; their blood type may not be needed, or the center simply could not accept everyone. The solution to this challenge was close cooperation with an NGO DonorUA. Through their website you can become a reserve donor and sign up for a donation online. The most difficult element was the cooperation between volunteers and blood centers, despite all the official documents of the Ministry of Health regulating this topic. However, the process of interaction with DonorUA is currently stable. So, if you want to donate blood - the best way is to plan it is to register on the <https://www.donor.ua/> website.

Interview

YOU ARE NOW DESIGNING THE BLOOD IT SPACE AND THE DONOR REGISTRY FOR THE MOH. CAN YOU PLEASE EXPLAIN IN DETAIL HOW WOULD SUCH SOFTWARE WORK FOR BOTH - DONORS AND BLOOD CENTERS?

We are building not only a specific IT system, but we are actually forming an idea of how the ideal IT space for the blood sector should function: we call it the information space of the blood system of Ukraine. Why space? In order not to use the worn-out "eco-system", the space includes the following components:

- System "eKrov", that is actually an inner IT system for the work of blood centers and UTCC;
- A set of registers and functions for working with databases regarding transfusions in eHealth and adequate update of medical information systems at healthcare facilities;
- Establishment of a so-called National blood bank, a central database on blood stocks across the country;
- A universal tool for connecting donor's personal accounts from anyone: DonorUA, Diia, MIS, so that they are all synchronised with Space.

It should be noted that in addition to the EU standards

and the convenience for blood donors, a separate priority is to follow the principle of "from vein to vein" - when we know absolutely everything that happened to a particular blood unit and can trace all the actions and all the consequences of using this blood.

WHAT OTHER ACTIVITIES ARE PLANNED WITHIN MOH TEAM IN COOPERATION WITH THE PROJECT TO SUPPORT BLOOD SAFETY SYSTEM IN UKRAINE DURING THIS YEAR?

The upcoming activities can be summarised as follows: capacity building of the UTCC, IT support and preparation of the legislative basis. UTCC is responsible for the implementation of all ideas and plans in the national blood donation sector, of which there are many: new processes, harmonisation with the EU, new technologies at blood establishments, introduction of new IT products on the ground. All this requires a great number of external specialists and strengthening the capacity of the internal ones. The second and third tasks are simpler: all global ideas need IT support and legislative regulation.

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The overall project's objective is to support the modernisation and development of a sustainable Public Health System that is able to ensure disease prevention and control standards in line with EU legislation, requirements, and practices. The project shall contribute to strengthening national leadership and capacity in Public Health policy programming and implementation. The project supports the consolidation and empowerment of the newly created Public Health Centre of Ukraine (UPHC) and supports the creation of a modern Blood Safety System in Ukraine.



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