



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
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Alexandra Janovskaia, Policy Officer, EU Delegation to Ukraine

On the other hand, it was extremely important to show to Ukrainian citizens that they were not alone, that they are taken care about and supported, especially vulnerable groups who needed particular treatment or therapy. This is how the idea of the information campaign on healthcare services for HIV treatment, tuberculosis and Hepatitis B and C testing and curation, as well as substitutional therapy arose.

The Project "Support to Ukraine in developing a modern public health system", financed by the EU and supported by the EU Delegation to Ukraine and the partners from UNODC, WHO Regional Office Europe, ECDC, UNAIDS and regional networks, developed a communication campaign so that risk groups as well as a wider audience could get better information about medical treatment options across different EU states and EU neighboring countries. The project designed the website www.treatment4ukraine.com, that to date provided extensive information on legal and health care support to more than 7500 users from Ukraine around Europe so far. The webpages describing facilities in Poland, Germany and Czech Republic were the most visited reflecting that these countries host significant number of Ukrainians that fled from war.

One of the most prominent achievements that enhances strong cooperation between Ukraine and

Nine months after the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation in Ukraine, the world has adapted to the new reality and the challenges caused by war. But even despite the continuous missile and drone shelling of Ukrainian cities, Ukrainian society is united, resistant, and eager to strengthen its business and diplomatic relations with international partners.

Over 7.6 million entries from Ukraine were recorded across the EU countries, resulting in a significant migration crisis. Now around 4 million of them are registered for Temporary Protection or similar national protection schemes, according to UNHCR. The local communities, governments, volunteers, and healthcare facilities workers made their best to host Ukrainian people in the countries bordering Ukraine and beyond.

the EU is the candidacy status granted to Ukraine by the European Commission on June 23, 2022, with the perspective to becoming a Member of the European Union. Thanks to the implementation of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, Ukraine has already brought its legislation to a certain degree closer to EU standards. The recognition of Ukraine as EU candidate will hopefully be a driving force for Ukrainian authorities supported by civil society, to engage in further reforms on the legal and regulatory front, but also in institutional capacity building.

Public health system reform is also one of the key topics in the EU-Ukraine cooperation. On September 6, 2022, Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine approved the Public

Health Law, that was developed with the assistance of the project "Support to Ukraine in developing a modern public health system" and other international partners. This Law represents a good foundation for further legal and regulatory approximation in public health. The Project plans to continue its assistance to the Ministry of Health in several related public health areas.

The EU Delegation to Ukraine expresses its profound admiration and respect for Ukrainian bravery and resilience during Russia's war of aggression and remains a reliable partner for all Ukrainian citizens – those who temporarily moved across European countries and those staying in Ukraine.

Project Steering Committee Summer 2022

A regular Project Steering Committee meeting was held on August 25, 2022, bringing together the members of the project team, EU Delegation to Ukraine and GFA, along with the Ministry of Health, Public Health Center, and the Ukrainian Transplant Coordination Center to discuss the progress of the Project activities.

As the meeting was conducted 2 weeks prior to the Public Health Law 4142 voting in Verkhovna Rada, the progress and the challenges of the Law implementation and development of the by-laws were the focus of the discussion. It was highlighted by the deputy minister Ihor Kuzin that the Project experts' support in drafting the Eurointegration documents on the adaptation of the European legislation in Ukraine was and still is relevant and useful.

In addition to that, the Project contributed to the

Public Health Strategy 2030, Ukrainian National System Recovery Plan, Ukrvaktsyna Strategic Plan and assisted with some particular regulations in the area of food safety and tobacco ban, a series of orders in epidemiological surveillance, and several communication activities in cooperation with the Public Health Center.

One significant area covered by the Project during the last few months was the development of the blood safety system, and its IT component. The voluntary non-remunerated blood donor recruitment campaign is ongoing, followed by the celebrations of the World Blood Donor Day each 14th of June and the extended campaign "Your blood can fight" that started early September after the Project Steering Committee meeting was held.

Financial managers of PHC and rCDCs were supported through a series of workshops on costing of public health services

The series of workshops was held in October and November 2022, and during four sessions over 50 participants representing management of PHC and rCDCs were introduced to basic theoretical principles, methodological approaches and practical considerations related to costing of public health services on national, regional and organisational level. They were also provided with an overview of a costing study process and participated in a practical exercise for planning resources such as staff, budget and technical requirements for conducting a costing study.

The aim of this training course was to strengthen the Ukrainian public health institutions' capacities in financial planning and administrative management. Capacity building activities of UPHC go in line with the public health reform and are extremely relevant in view of the emergency caused by the war in Ukraine. The topic was well received among participants, which was reflected in the Q&A sessions as well as during the practical assignments and group work where the teams elaborated the costing plan with the essential resources such as staff, budget and technical requirements included.

The Assessment of the PHC Capacities was initiated

Following the project's main goal to assist with establishing an effective quality assurance and quality improvement system in the area of public health that is based on the European standards, the assessment of PHC institutional and individual capacities was initiated.

Recently endorsed law N°4142 on Public Health stipulates the role of UPHC as the main public health expert institution and coordinator of public health functions operationalised through disease control and prevention centers and other entities engaged in the provision of public health services.

Once gained, the results of the study will be beneficial for the implementation of the European health policy framework Health 2020 and its accompanying action plan to strengthen public health capacities and services. Therefore, an organisational assessment is required to scale up the performance based on the law. The assessment framework covers several criteria such as: organisational profile, leadership, strategic planning, measurement, analysis, and knowledge management, workforce focus and operation focus.

The Project contributed to a food fortification decree development in cooperation with MoH and UPHC

A draft order on fortification of food products was developed and discussed with the UPHC. Food fortification is the practice of increasing the vitamin and micronutrient content of foods to improve their nutritional value. The Project's engagement to this procedure is based on the Article 11 of the Law of Ukraine " On Quality and Safety of Food Products and Food Raw Materials " elaborated by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. The draft decree contains all the requirements, restrictions and purity criteria for addition of vitamins and minerals.

The decree is aimed at approving the Rules of Procedure for Fortification of Food products with subsequent Annexes, in particular it lists of vitamins and minerals, vitamin formulations and mineral substances which may be added to foods, as well as substances whose use in foods is prohibited, restricted or under

scrutiny of the MoH. Another significant goal is to instruct the MoH to establish and maintain a Register on the addition of vitamins and minerals and of certain other substances to foods, with specific foods where additions of any vitamins, minerals or certain other substances is prohibited or restricted and identify specific foods or categories of foods where addition of vitamins and minerals is mandatory.

A substantial part of the document is dedicated to labelling, presentation and advertising rules of foods to which vitamins and minerals have been added. The project experts also contributed to listing the substances prohibited, restricted or under the MoH scrutiny. Once approved and duly monitored by MoH, this decree will significantly improve the quality of food products, hence, the diet of Ukrainians.

The Project conducted an analysis of the EU regulation on electromagnetic field impact on human health

The Ministry of Health of Ukraine (MoH) is currently developing a draft order "On Amendments to State Sanitary Norms and Rules for the Protection of the Population from the Impact of Electromagnetic Radiation", which provides for an increase in the maximum permissible level of the electromagnetic field (EMF) for radio engineering facilities, operating in the very high, ultrahigh, super high and extremely high frequency ranges. The adoption of the draft order will allow the effective implementation of LTE technology in Ukraine and will enable Ukrainians to use high-quality mobile communications and high-speed Internet on all international and national highways and in highly populated areas.

Considering the emphasised need to promote the existing international standards regarding the regulation of electromagnetic radiation levels in Ukraine, the Project assisted to MoH with additional analysis of EU and international regulation on the maximum permissible levels of the electromagnetic field for radio engineering objects operating in the ranges of very high, ultrahigh, super high and extremely

high frequencies and approaches to EMR regulation in the countries of the European Union.

The main findings of the Project analysis were based on the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) guidelines, The European Council 1999/519/EC recommendation and the WHO Radiation Programme.

Based on the analysis, the Project recommends MoH to align the 'State Sanitary Standards and Rules on Protection of Public Health Against Electromagnetic Radiation' document with the European Council Recommendation on the limitation of exposure of the general public to electromagnetic fields 1999/519/EC. In that way, the MoH can be confident that if the EMF limits are adhered to, electromagnetic field exposure within Ukraine will not cause adverse health effects to members of the public.

The Project has established partnership with UTCC and Ukrainian NGOs for encouraging regular voluntary blood donation as a part of culture



The only way to ensure timely availability and sufficient quantities of donor blood in the country is to cultivate voluntary donation as a good habit, because the prevalence of blood-borne infections among such donors is usually the lowest.

Voluntary, non-remunerated blood donation (VNRBD) has been recognised as the cornerstone of a safe and sustainable supply of blood and blood products sufficient to meet the transfusion requirements of the patient population. Scientific evidence and ethical principles supporting VNRBD have been well established over the years and promoted by the Council of Europe, the European Union, the World Health Organisation (WHO), the International Federation of Red Crescents (IFRC), the International Society for Blood Transfusion (ISBT), and the European Blood Alliance (EBA).

The project supported the Ukrainian centre for transplant coordination (UTCC) in cooperation with MoH, the "DonorUA" platform, and Helsi medical service, in the implementation of the voluntary regular blood donation campaign "Your blood can fight. Become a donor", that was launched in September 2022 as a part of the digital campaign and attracted attention of over 2 million Ukrainians. Permanent provision of donor blood and its components is a

guarantee of national security and defence capability of the country, especially under the conditions of martial law.

The campaign is illustrated by the mural on the gate of a house in the center of Kharkiv that was shelled. Artist Hamlet Zinkivskyi created this mural after donating blood himself for military needs.

The Project assisted with the establishment of campaign at [UTCC's website](#). Communication materials that the project designed, printed and distributed were mainly about preparation for blood donation, frequently asked questions and answers on blood donation, morning routine of a donor, recovery after donation, myths about blood donation, terms and definitions in the blood transfusion area. Information can also be found at campaign landing page.

The [video](#) supporting the voluntary blood donors' mobilisation and recruitment communication campaign "Your blood can fight. Become a donor" was produced and published at UTCC and partners' platforms (MoH, DEU, DonorUA) with the total reach of over 470 000 existing or potential donors.

Everyone who makes regular voluntary blood donation enables doctors to provide the necessary medical care, save heroes and restore health of civilians.

Single information space for the blood service of Ukraine to be introduced

The information space aims at ensuring effective interaction between all participants of the blood system: donors, recipients, medical institutions, and authorities. Therefore, a unified national system for registration of donors, recipients, donations, stocks and needs of blood and/or its components, and blood transfusions in Ukraine is being created.

With the project support, a team of IT specialists is working on the technical requirements for creating an information space of the blood system, consisting of the following components:

- ← eKrov system – an internal IT system for the operation of blood centers and the Ukrainian centre for transplant coordination (UTCC);
- ← a set of registers and functionalities for working with data on transfusions in the eHealth system and the corresponding update of the Medical Information Systems of the health care facilities;
- ← creation of the so-called National Blood Bank, a central database for all blood stocks in the country;

- ← a universal tool for connecting personal accounts of donors: “DonorUA”, Diia, MISs, so that they are all synchronised within the information space.

The project supports the development of an information and communication system for blood donation, as well as the development and implementation of technological changes (modifications) of the electronic health care system “eHealth” in order to ensure the performance of functions related to the area of donation of blood and blood components.

Mr Roman Lanskyi, adviser to the Minister of Health of Ukraine on digitalization, specifies:

“We are not only building a specific IT system, but actually creating an idea of how an ideal IT environment for the blood service should function - the so-called information space of the blood system of Ukraine. And space here means an “eco-system”.

The new system also automates the work of blood centers. The operation of a single information space will allow to solve issues not only at individual healthcare facilities, but also at the regional and national levels.

Interview

UPHC and project collaboration in enhancing of communication in public health

Marharyta Matlak,

UPHC content manager

OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS OF 2022, THE PROJECT HAS BEEN ASSISTING UPHC WITH A SERIES OF SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGES PROMOTION USING FACEBOOK. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THIS DIGITAL CAMPAIGN? WHAT AUDIENCE WAS COVERED, AND WHICH TOPICS HAD THE BEST RESPONSE?

Considering the strong public attention to the war topic, we struggled with gaining attention. Due to the collaboration with the project "Support to Ukraine in developing a modern public health system", 36 publications were promoted on the UPHC Facebook page within the campaign from May to November 2022. The topics included the prophylaxis of communicable and non-communicable diseases in wartime. The total reach makes up over 1 million of unique users seeing 5 promo posts per person on average in the newsfeed for 6 months.

The most popular topics were COVID-19 related posts, especially vaccination in war times. Another topic that had good response and coverage was on maintaining a healthy diet in war conditions, especially for those forcibly displaced.

AS A RESPONSE TO A UPHC COMMUNICATION TEAM REQUEST, THE PROJECT HAS REVISED THE CURRENT UPHC WEBSITE AND ELABORATED A SERIES OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TECHNICAL SPECIALISTS TO MAKE THE WEBSITE MORE USER FRIENDLY FOR VARIOUS TARGET AUDIENCES. WHAT WERE YOUR MAIN INSIGHTS AFTER THE ANALYSIS

Anton Yudin,

UPHC website administrator

WAS PROVIDED AND WHAT CHANGES ARE YOU GOING TO APPLY TO THE WEBSITE SOON?

The third-party specialists' analysis is useful, as it gives unbiased perspective. We received both detailed recommendations on issues that were obvious to us, and useful suggestions for improvements that had not yet occurred to us or were not clearly formulated.

For example, we have long been planning the redesign of the site considering best practices (samples of the structure and design of web resources on similar topics from around the world) — and finally got a clearer idea of the main areas of such improvement.

Some sections of the site have already been moved and rearranged according to the proposed changes. Search optimisation is also ongoing (in particular, the implementation of Open Graph markup in the news).

WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT DO YOU NEED FROM THE PROJECT IN TERMS OF COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES?

Under the UPHC website reorganisation, financial support would be useful to cover the services of IT-specialists helping us address the changes we are not able to introduce on our own. We are grateful to the EU Project for its communication activities support that ensures delivering crucial messages to wider audiences, given that it is extremely important now to take care of Ukrainians citizens' health and lives.

Interview

Functioning of a blood donor unit during wartime: Zhytomyr experience



Anatoliy Chuhriev,
director of the communal non-profit entity “Regional blood center” of the Zhytomyr regional administration.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN GOALS OF THE NATIONAL BLOOD SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT AND HOW WERE THEY AFFECTED BY THE WAR?

The goal is to achieve a certain level of self-sufficiency for the country's healthcare facilities in terms of safe and high-quality blood components according to the nomenclature approved by the Ministry of Health of Ukraine. During the war, the need for blood components for the Armed Forces increased, while considering such specifics as the distance, terms, and conditions for transportation of blood components. The collection of blood from donors at the occupied territories has been temporarily suspended due to the reduction of the number of operating blood centers and population decrease by approximately 6-7 million. Donors who moved to the central and western regions of Ukraine continue to donate blood, but there is no information about them in the regional registers of persons deferred from donation. The implementation of the Law of Ukraine “On the safety and quality of donor blood” under war conditions identified a priority for blood collection - the mobile blood units with the involvement of the maximum number of donors per day, that is around 100 - 130.

HOW WERE ACTIVITIES OF ZHYTOMYR BLOOD CENTER WAS REORGANISED DURING WARTIME?

In the first four days of the Russian invasion (February 24 - 27), the regional blood center accepted almost 1,500 donors. The priority was given to blood collection in populated localities of the region: on February 24, 120 donors were accepted in one town, then the team was driving to reach other localities every day for two weeks. We observed a so called “syndrome of massive blood donations”, which created an excess of blood stocks for a short period of 30-40 days.

Processing of blood into components was carried out on the day of collection. It was a significant load on personnel and equipment over 12 - 14 hours of work per day.

In order to optimise the collection of donor blood, we have prepared a schedule of mobile blood units until the end of the year, which was agreed with the regional military administration. According to the needs of regional hospitals and Armed Forces of Ukraine, the blood stock management system was amended at the level of Zhytomyr regional blood center. The blood center was operating in accordance with the Laws of Ukraine for the wartime period in coordination with the regional and district military administrations.

HOW DID THE DYNAMICS OF BLOOD DONATION CHANGE AFTER THE INVASION AND HOW IS THE DONATION PROCESS ORGANISED UNDER THE CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES?

During the past 9 months, 45 mobile blood units drove across the region to collect donor blood, in 2021, for example, there were only 12 mobile blood collection events. In 2022, 2,633 donors were accepted against 671 donors in 2021. The specific weight of blood donations during mobile drives increased from 13.4% in 2021 to 35.4% in 2022. According to the volumes of erythrocyte-containing

Interview

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blood components ordered by regional hospitals for 2023, we have prepared a schedule for receiving donors outside the regional blood center for 2023.

HOW ARE SAFE BLOOD DONATION PROCESS AND TRANSFUSION SERVICES ENSURED DURING WARTIME?

The Law of Ukraine "On safety and quality of donor blood" entered into force in January 2021. In the IV quarter of 2020, the organisational measures for the implementation of the Law were carried out: the heads of healthcare institutions were familiarised with the new structure of the national blood system and the functions of each level of the structure, a schedule for accepting donors was prepared and submitted to the regional state administrations. A Transfusion Medicine Committee was established in 2006 at the health care department of the regional state administration and in every hospital of our region. The creation of hospital blood banks started in 2007 at hospitals that have stopped collecting blood from donors. In 2002, our blood center conducted the first audit on the use of components and blood products. The centre specialists have prepared and issued guidance guideline titled "Temporary regulation on the use of blood components and products at healthcare institutions of Zhytomyr region". In the course of 2003 – 2011, audits on the use of blood products were conducted once every 2-3 years with consideration of the audit results at a meeting of the Transfusion Medicine Committee.

In December 2021, the center established a schedule of receiving donors in the communities of the region for 2022. With focus on attracting donors with minimal social behaviour risks, the specific weight of such donors increased from 43% to 57% in 2022 (in 9 months). A group of regular donors, who are routinely tested for TTI, has been formed for the preparation of apheresis platelet concentrate (CTa) which is used to prevent or treat bleeding in people with either a low platelet count or poor platelet function.

HOW QUICKLY WAS IT POSSIBLE TO ADAPT THE STAFF OF BLOOD ESTABLISHMENTS TO NEW REALITIES?

The staff is really united regarding their functions since February 24. Since the first day of the war, everyone is working to fulfil the hospitals' orders for blood components in full. The administration of the regional blood center, director, medical director, and the head nurse are the last to leave the blood center. In the first days, volunteers have organised the arrivals, departures and meals for the staff. Production of blood components (centrifugation, certification and storage) from donor blood received from mobile drive teams is carried out within 2-2.5 hours after receiving the collected blood at the blood center. In the dark hours of the day, the transportation back home is organised for each employee. We are united and work for the victory.

Glory to Ukraine!

This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the project "Support to Ukraine for Developing a Modern Public Health System" and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

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.



Finnish institute for health and welfare



Ukraine, Kyiv, 41 Yaroslavskya Str.