



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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Iryna Rudenko, Director General of the Public Health Directorate of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine

Union has become especially important for Ukraine. Today we are working intensively on the development of projects to reform the public health system, the introduction of medical innovations, testing new logistics solutions. Since 2019, together with the specialists of the project "Support to Ukraine for developing a modern Public Health System", the team of the Ministry of Health, including expert groups of the Directorate of Public Health and Disease Prevention, have been working on health care reform and adaptation of the Ukrainian health care system to European standards. We are adopting the experience of neighboring countries in the field of disease control and prevention, developing new plans and instructions for national structures working in the public health system of Ukraine.

2020 has become a catalyst for society, business and public institutions. Today, the focus has changed; the priorities of these institutions for the current year are the development of stress resilience, crisis management and adaptability. The public health system has taken on perhaps the strongest blow, which, however, has helped optimise the work of the Ministry of Health and increase its efficiency.

The pandemic has taught us to unite for the common goals and to support each other. The assistance of the European

Millions of lives depend on the expertise of health workers, so the direction of reforming medical education is currently the priority for the Ministry of Health. We have solved the financing problem of intern trainings, provided inpatient departments and laboratory centers with new material and technical base, worked on the establishment of university clinics in medical universities and improved the level of information hygiene in society. Interaction with the experts of the project "Support to Ukraine for developing a modern Public Health System" helps us to keep a high bar in the

implementation of reforms. The goal of the project is formed in accordance with the UN Sustainable Development Agenda until 2030, which is signed by Ukraine. In support of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, we are adapting the quality of national health care to international requirements and debunking stereotypes about Ukraine's health care system.

The recent developments in the project include: finalisation of the draft law "On the Public Health System", assessment of administrative and communication capabilities of public health institutions; preparation of a report on the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, translation of EU regulations on SARS-COV-2; holding consultative meetings on the implementation of blood safety legislation; organisation of

master classes on non-communicable disease prevention. We also began working on planning and developing the latest training programs for university health workers and reviewing the current provisions of the National Action Plan on Noncommunicable Diseases Related to Food Labeling.

The Directorate of Public Health and Disease Prevention of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine shares the same goals and objectives of the project and expects that our cooperation will result in developing the potential and expertise of Ukrainian health workers. Professional support of foreign colleagues is beneficial for improving the quality of medical services in Ukraine and creating a sustainable public health system.

Project's achievements of 2020

On December 3-4, 2020, a presentation of the annual achievements and results of the Project "Support to Ukraine for developing a modern Public Health System" took place. Key expert Mohammed Abouelfarag reviewed last year's activities and shared the Project's plans for 2021. In 2020, the project team continued working on three components:

- ✦ Consolidation of the Center, ensuring its functioning in accordance with the latest scientific, technological and epidemiological changes;
- ✦ Building a modern blood system in Ukraine and ensuring its stability;
- ✦ Ensuring communication and raising public awareness of the Project.

According to these components, the Project experts worked on a legal framework related to public health; analysed the capabilities and needs of the Public Health Center, regional

public health centers and Laboratory Centers of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, and started developing national public health campaigns. In addition, the Project actively responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in Ukraine by conducting technical videoconferences for healthcare professionals in order to share European best practices, translating relevant EU directives and the guidelines of the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control.

Working on the development of the national blood safety system, the Project experts researched the level of service quality, projected blood needs for the next 10 years and conducted a study of the institutional capacity of the blood service. In addition, within the framework of the Project, targeted online trainings were conducted for communication departments of the Ministry of Health, PHC, and rPHCs. The participants were involved into five modules covering the following topics: "Communication process and communication strategy development", "Communication campaigns", "Communications and social media", "Media Training", "Crisis communications".

Strengthening the national response to COVID-19 pandemic

In order to support the national response to the Sars-Cov pandemic, it was agreed to extend the project implementation period until May 2023.

This extension will ensure a timely implementation of all additional advisory services to the national pandemic response through setting up necessary structures to respond to the pandemic and to prevent future outbreaks and at the same time to proceed with the originally planned and agreed activities.

In order to provide evidence-based public health communication during pandemic, the project team will develop the set of response activities to ensure supporting the UPHC and rPHCs public relations departments in communication with the public about COVID-19 pandemic:

- ✦ drafting, revising, translating and updating guidelines and

protocols for COVID-19 pandemic as a way to assist in adapting the key messages of European experience to Ukrainian context;

- ✦ conducting trainings in public health institutions;
- ✦ establishing and maintaining educational resources for the general public and specific audiences of the healthcare system.

Therefore, the project team anticipates that this one-year extension will positively affect the capacity strengthening of relevant personnel and developing or updating guidelines and protocols for pandemic situations. Another goal is to establish information communication lines between the Ministry of Health, the Public Health Center of Ukraine, different stakeholders, and the public. This will help the health system in Ukraine to be more responsive, adaptive and flexible, which are hallmarks of resilience.

Epidemiological surveillance modules were conducted

In the first week of February 2021, a training module on "Topical issues of epidemiological surveillance" was held. The trainers were experts from the Project "Support to Ukraine for developing a modern Public Health System" Oksana Artemchuk and Anastasiya Taroyants together with the specialists from the Department of Organisation of Surveillance of UPHC of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine.

The online event was conducted for health professionals, family physicians, infectious disease physicians, epidemiologists, and laboratory health professionals. The experts explained how the epidemiological surveillance of

infectious diseases is regulated in the EU. Also, they spoke about how the reporting process takes place, and acquainted the participants with the provisions of the Ministry of Health Order "On approval of the Procedure for accounting, reporting and epidemiological surveillance of infectious diseases and infectious diseases".

In addition, the participating professional parties identified the priority areas of cooperation between different sectors of health and public health in the field of epidemiological surveillance of infectious diseases.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the public health system in Finland

On February 23, another online masterclass for over 200 physicians, epidemiologists, infectious disease specialists and public health center workers in Ukraine took place online. Svitlana Pkhidenko was facilitating the event, while the international experts of the Project "Support to Ukraine for developing a modern Public Health System" Pekka Jousilahti and Tiian Laatikainen from the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare shared the experience with participants how the healthcare system works in Finland and which elements could

be transferred and implemented in Ukraine.

In addition, the presenters shared the data on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Finnish society and the public health system. Particularly, long waiting queues for emergency medical services occurred. During the pandemic in Finland, the number of visits to children's and schools, dental clinics decreased, as well as the number of cancer screenings. At the same time, the number of crimes related to violence, as well as injuries and illnesses of children, decreased.

SWOT-report on food labeling in Ukraine

Experts of the Project Erkki Vartiainen and Svitlana Pkhidenko in cooperation with the Public Health Center of the Ministry of Health prepared a report on "Analysis of strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats of food labeling in Ukraine".

The need for such a study stipulated the fact that an unhealthy diet is one of the main reasons for the independent state of health of Ukrainians (as of 2019). The National Action Plan on Non-communicable Diseases is related to the improvement of the legislation in the field of food labeling. Better labeling will not only support the promotion of healthy eating but also empower the consumers to easily identify healthy food and make better decisions. The implementation of such labeling systems (clear description of the product, its nutrients and emulsifiers) should be part of an effective marketing strategy in all countries.

The first meeting of the Task Force on the Review of National Priority Programs and Establishments Aimed at Improving Food Labeling was held on December 10, 2020. A working group of 42 participants met online. The discussion was attended by representatives of the Department of Health of the Ministry of

Health of Ukraine, UPHC, academia, professional associations, non-government organisations, and representatives from private businesses.

Key and non-key experts prepared the SWOT-analysis of the modern food labeling system. The strength defined was the adoption of the Law "On information for consumers about food products", which is an effective mechanism for informing consumers about food products, their ingredients, their composition, nutritional value, mode of consumption.

The experts also identified a central weakness of the process: there is no specific information for groups of patients with chronic noncommunicable diseases.

The opportunities include the willingness of the media to collaborate on raising public awareness of the benefits of food labeling (FOLP).

Eventually, the delay of the adoption and implementation of regulations in connection with COVID-19 is considered a main potential threat of the process.

Assessment of the Ukrainian public health educational curricula

The special role in the reform of the public health system in Ukraine is devoted to the development of a modern curricula for public health that ensures the acquisition of relevant competencies, knowledge, and skills by graduates of Master's and Bachelor's programs. Thus, the Project team of Tiina Laatikainen, Svitlana Pkhidenko, Olaf Horstick and the Project team leader Predrag Duric prepared another assessment report: "Review of public health curricula of Ukrainian educational institutions".

The report revealed that in Master's and Bachelor's curricula in Ukraine:

- ✦ Health economy and economic evaluation are less covered;
- ✦ Most of the curricula are health care oriented, including also several clearly medical or clinical components. In some institutions, the emphasis is strongly on control of epidemics, biosafety and hygiene;
- ✦ Competencies needed for planning, managing, advocating and evaluating practical work and activities are scarce in the training components;
- ✦ Master's curricula cover more topics related to communication, culture and advocacy, which are weak in bachelor's curricula;

✦ Community oriented contents and topics emphasising inter-sectoral action on disease prevention and health promotion are not visible in the contents of the training components;

✦ Occupational health is covered in some of the training programs, but accidents and injuries are mentioned only in the curriculum of the other reviewed Bachelor's program.

It is highly recommended that the UPHC, in collaboration with universities and other educational institutions who are providing training for public health professionals, develop complementary education programs for the key staff - especially in the areas where the staff reports a lack of competencies and indicates special needs for training. This could be done by creating separate curricula for a complementary public health training for continuous education in the educational institutions. Another way to achieve this is to create the possibilities for continuous training for the staff through in-house training activities or by utilising other national or international training possibilities.

In future, there is also a clear need to pay attention to the development of the Master's and Bachelor's training curricula to more widely cover the generic core competencies of public health professionals. The close collaboration between UPHC and educational institutions would most likely benefit the future development.

Training of E-trainers



During the COVID-19 pandemic, the improvement of the training of health workers became one of the challenges facing public health facilities. Together with the project experts, the Public Health Center and regional Public Health Centers have developed an educational facilitation course "Training of E-trainers". The focus of this course was to teach participants to confidently perform the role of facilitator in online training settings.

During the classes, the participants got acquainted with the selected online tools and methods of facilitation of synchronous online sessions and asynchronous classes on the educational platform "edX" by UPHC. The trainers were Christine Fenz, international project expert, senior trainer and consultant of GFA Consulting Group, and Anastasia Taroyants, national project expert, trainer, psychologist and responsible specialist of the Ukrainian Institute of Public Health Policy.

Interview



Christine Fenz,

Project Senior non-key expert in training, Senior Trainer and Consultant for the C³ Unit for Better Learning of GFA Consulting Group (Germany)

WHAT TRAINING ACTIVITIES FOR UPHC, RPHCS AND LABORATORY CENTERS' PERSONNEL DID YOU DEVELOP WITHIN THE PROJECT? WHAT WERE THE OUTCOMES? WHAT CAPACITIES OF THE PERSONNEL WERE ENHANCED?

Within this project, I co-developed two online training courses: One communications training in 2020 and the course "Train-the-e-Trainer" on how to conduct interactive e-learning courses in 2021.

In the communications training, the project's two communications experts – Dmytro Konyk and Marko Lähtenmäki – took the lead in upgrading participants' skills in developing communication strategies, organising communications campaigns, dealing more confidently with social media and journalists and – finally – in adequately responding to situations of crisis. Especially the latter topic has proven to be extremely useful for communication staff during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Train-the-e-Trainer course has enhanced participants' capacities to confidently facilitate online training sessions. Participants were familiarised with selected tools and methods for synchronous video conferences and asynchronous

activities on the UPHC edX learning platform, such as quizzes, forums and free-text assignments.

WHAT TECHNIQUES AND APPROACHES OF YOUR PREVIOUS PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE DID YOU APPLY IN DRAFTING THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR UPHC PERSONNEL?

I have been developing and implementing numerous face-to-face and online training courses throughout the past ten years, among which were many train-the-trainer programs. Especially during 2020, the GFA-internal C³ Unit for Better Learning has collected a wealth of good practices for online learning. The "Train-the-e-Trainer" course incorporates the essence of our lessons learnt.

My approach for this course was based on the action learning cycle, which we also apply in face-to-face training courses: We usually started by activating our participants, e.g. through a group work task (by using breakout sessions and a virtual whiteboard). Back in plenary, group work results were presented and discussed, after which I gave a trainer input in order to summarise the key messages of the session and by connecting them to the participants' work context.

YOU ARE THE SENIOR TRAINER AND METHODOLOGIST OF TRAIN-THE-E-TRAINER ONLINE COURSE THAT WAS IMPLEMENTED IN MARCH. WHAT WAS THE GOAL OF THIS EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY AND WHAT TRAINING METHODS DID YOU USE TO RAISE THE COMPETENCIES OF THE PARTICIPANTS IN FACILITATION AND E-LEARNING?

The training objective was to enable staff members of public health centers and laboratories to facilitate online courses by themselves. This skill has become extremely important through the Covid-19 lockdown. But e-learning is here to stay! Even when Covid-19 has hopefully disappeared one day, I am sure that public health centers will work more online than before.

Our method was to let public health staff members experience online tools by themselves. For example, instead of explaining what is a virtual whiteboard or what is the difference between an online forum and an e-learning assignment, we let participants use the tools, afterwards reflected about their experience and finally collected and summarised golden rules for using each tool.

THE ONLINE EDUCATION IS EXTREMELY UP TO DATE NOW. HOW TO MAKE THE E-LEARNING PROCESS EXCITING AND EFFECTIVE? WHAT TOOLS AND INTERACTIVE FORMATS CAN BE APPLIED TO HOLD THE PARTICIPANTS' ATTENTION AND COMMITMENT?

The training course was organised as a combination of live sessions and homework assignments on the UPHC learning platform. We used a large variety of tools in order to make the training as interactive as possible: A voting tool (Mentimeter) for brainstorming, small surveys and evaluations and a virtual whiteboard (Padlet) for visualising group work results. The live sessions were conducted with Zoom, which allows for group work in breakout sessions and participation through comments in the chat.

In-between live sessions, participants completed homework

assignments for deepening and digesting the previous session as well as for familiarising themselves with the topic of the next session. For that we used tools, such as quizzes, forums and group work assignments, which needed to be uploaded on the platform. The training content was made available to participants in the form of factsheets for each topic.

WHAT CHALLENGES DO YOU FACE AS A TRAINER AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM?

Online training has very specific challenges or barriers, which we need to overcome as trainers as they affect motivation and the learning outcome.

Proximity to the participants is one of the challenges: Everyone sits in a different place and there is no opportunity for personal conversations or small talk on the side. Participants are often tempted to "dive off" and work on other tasks in parallel. On top, there is often frustration with connection problems, lack of equipment, such as cameras, and an overburdening with technical tools.

Another challenge in e-learning is to provide participants with orientation and guidance: With information transmitted exclusively via screen, the participants often lack a common framework and orientation: What is the goal of the event? Where are we in the process right now?

My response to these challenges is: I put myself in the perspective of the learner. Which interactive tools is suitable to activate the group and bring participants in contact with each other and with the trainers? I provide opportunities for mutual feedback, I use visualisation techniques, I develop hands-on background material with the key messages etc. The ultimate challenge for me is - and this accounts also for face-to-face training: How can I best respond to the needs and expectations of the participants so they leave the training with important take-aways for their professional and personal development.



Mohammed Farouk Abouelfarag,

Project Key expert on blood
safety

BEING AN EXPERT IN BLOOD SAFETY AREA, WOULD YOU ELABORATE HOW THE BLOOD TRANSFUSION SAFETY WAS LEGALLY TACKLED AT THE EU LEVEL?

In 2002, the European Union established a legislative foundation for setting a high level of quality and safety of human blood and blood components with the adoption of Directive 2002/98/EC. This EU Blood Directive can be considered as the first and leading attempt to formulate uniform standards on quality and safety for human blood and blood components and it places a major obligation on Member States and their identified competent authorities to carry out regular inspections and control of all blood establishments on their territory. In addition, it requires all blood establishments to establish and maintain a quality system based on the principles of good practice. This directive is considered to be the "Mother Directive" and provided the basis to develop three more specific Directives setting out the technical measures for implementation. The first of which, Directive (2004/33/EC), lays down the technical requirements on the suitability of blood and plasma donors and the screening of donated blood in the European Community, as called for in the Directive

2002/98/EC. The second one, Directive 2005/61/EC, deals with traceability and notification of serious adverse reactions and events and the notification format. The last one, Directive (2005/62/EC), focuses on a quality system for blood establishments and it sets out standards and specifications for these establishments. While these directives are binding and all for all member states of the EU are required to accept this legal framework, they leave open quite some space to the individual members on the form and method of how to comply.

TO WHAT EXTENT, DO YOU THINK, THE EU PUT EMPHASIS ON BLOOD SAFETY IN UKRAINE?

Ukraine was not left behind developments in blood transfusion at the EU level, in 2014 the EU and Ukraine signed an Association Agreement with a specific chapter on cooperation related to public health which provides for a gradual approximation of Ukrainian legislations with the EU public health acquis, standards and best practices. This includes the specific EU legislation related to blood safety (Directive 2002/98/EC). For instance, Chapter 22 of this Association

Agreement, specifically, Article 427 states: «Such cooperation shall cover, in particular, the following areas: (d) quality and safety of substances of human origin, such as blood, tissues and cells...» and Article 428: «Ukraine shall gradually approximate its legislation and practice to the principles of the EU acquis, in particular regarding communicable diseases, blood, tissues and cells,...».

This comes in complete alignment with the interests of the government of Ukraine as the blood system strengthening is already prioritised in the Ukrainian Cabinet of Minister med-term plan of the Government's priority actions by 2020 (approved in 2017). In February 2019, this was put more operational as the Cabinet of Ministers has approved the strategy of development of the national blood system for the period up to 2022. This strategy provides for the reorganisation of the blood system at three levels: national, regional, and hospital. The reorganisation at the national level foresees the establishment of a national competent authority performing the functions of blood system regulation and inspection, and a national transfusion center performing the functions of service provision management, coordination and monitoring.

WOULD YOU ELABORATE MORE ON THE PROJECT'S OBJECTIVE IN THIS AREA AND HOW IT LINKS TO PUBLIC HEALTH?

The overall objective of the project clearly puts the emphasis on assisting the modernisation and development of a sustainable Public Health System (PHS) and supporting the creation of a modern Blood Safety System in Ukraine in line with EU legislation, requirements and practices. In this regard, it is worth to mention that ensuring the availability, quality and safety of blood and blood components continues to be a major preoccupation within the framework of public health on the international and European levels. In terms of blood safety, this project calls mainly for legislation alignment and development of a national blood system with the two typical arms of service provision and oversight (competent authority) for the provision of safe blood from voluntary and non-remunerated donors.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN PROBLEMS, IF ANY, OF THE BLOOD TRANSFUSION SYSTEM IN UKRAINE?

The Government of Ukraine adopted already, as mentioned previously, some strategies to reform the Ukrainian blood transfusion system, nevertheless, this reform is facing a lot of challenges. The major setback for the system was the old

legal base that was very complex, highly restrictive, incomplete, that does not reflect actual practice, does not reflect currently accepted international evidence-based medicine or practice, even it was promoting paid blood donation! Luckily enough this legal base was largely fixed with the adoption of the new blood safety law in Ukraine (Law No. 931-IX as of 30.09.2020), however, this is just the first step to tackle many other problems facing the Ukrainian blood transfusion system. Other issues that remain problematic for the system include: absence of blood transfusion competent or regulatory authority, fragmentation of the system to a dangerous level not allowing to reach economies of scale, insufficient supply of blood to meet the needs of the healthcare system as expected according the international norms, variability in institutionalisation of quality management systems and limited standardisation of technical operations of blood handling between different regions, inefficient use of blood and blood components at the clinical side, and finally, the limited training opportunities and unattractive career path for professionals working in the blood transfusion field.

WHAT POTENTIALS, IN YOUR OPINION, DOSE THE BLOOD TRANSFUSION SYSTEM HAVE IN UKRAINE?

Using some simple organisational development tools, for example SWOT analysis, one can realise easily that the blood system in Ukraine has a lot of potential, in fact, most of the weaknesses and threats to this system can be converted into strengths and opportunities. In addition to the political will, as evident by issuing the new blood safety law and strategy of the blood system, this can be realised only with a lot of effort and commitment. One big area of potential is the quick transformation of Ukrainian health system by modern electronic tools like Electronic Medical Files and eHealth; needless to highlight that Ukraine is turning with a steady pace into a hub for information technology innovations. Another area of potential is coming from the size of population that in one hand means more need for blood but on the other hand provides for a big blood donors base. The extensive regular ground transportation network of railways is a big add on, that allows to have a more centralised blood system (economies of scale) with easier delivery of products to different regions. Last but not least, the eagerness and willingness of professionals working in the blood transfusion system is one of the low hanging fruits that can be harvested quickly by initiating efforts to integrate these professionals in the international spheres of blood transfusion by translation of the international knowledge base and promoting participation in international research activities.

The overall project's objective is to support the modernization 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.