



# 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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## Frederik Coene Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation to Ukraine

The EU Delegation has been supporting Ukraine since 1991, after Ukraine gained its independence. The Association Agreement, including its Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, which was signed in 2014 and which fully entered into force in September 2017, is the main tool for bringing Ukraine and the EU closer together, while promoting deeper political ties, stronger economic links, and respect for common values.

The EU programme of financial and technical cooperation creates several opportunities for Ukraine's ambitious reform agenda, and, we are very excited to be part of the reform of Ukrainian's health sector by supporting the development of a modern public health system for Ukraine on behalf of the EU according to a dedicated Chapter on Public Health (Chapter 22) within the Association Agreement.

The aim of the project adheres to the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Agenda, to which Ukraine is a signatory: "To promote physical and mental health and well-being, and to extend life expectancy for all, we must achieve universal health coverage and access to quality health care".

Due to the commitment of outstanding and highly qualified national and international experts, the project aims to contribute to strengthening the national leadership and capacity in public health policy programming and implementation. The project team contributed to creation of the Action Plan for the development of human resources in the public health system until 2022 along with the National Public Health Center of Ukraine. In order to provide support to the national health care system, the project managed to translate the latest guidelines of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) on COVID-19, epidemiological surveillance, NCDs.

In recent months, the national and international experts have been working on various surveys and capacity assessments of regional public health centers (rPHCs) to support the public health institutions in creating and implementing the most efficient education programmes for their employees in communications, NCDs, and diphtheria. This aims to have a positive impact on the consolidation and empowerment of the Public Health Centre of Ukraine (UPHC) and regional public health centers (rPHCs) in order to create a sustainable system.

Another important pillar of this project is the creation of a modern blood safety system in Ukraine. The elaboration of legislative acts requiring the implementation of the adopted Ukrainian law "on safety and quality of donated blood and blood components" is ongoing. Due to the project experts' engagement, a tool for estimation of future blood components demand and the methodology for the calculation of costs for blood components collection were developed and are to be verified soon.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in several adjustments to the project implementation plan in order to support the national partners and the Ukrainian health system as much as possible. The EU Delegation in Kyiv strongly believes that this project will achieve its objectives and that the cooperation of all the parties will assert the sustainable public health system development in Ukraine.

## The third meeting of the Project Steering Committee: Achievements review

On November 24, 2020, the third Steering Committee Meeting of the project "Support to Ukraine in the development of a modern public health system" took place. Among the speakers were Viktor Liashko (Deputy Minister of Health), Ihor Ivashchenko (Deputy Minister of Health for European Integration), Mykhailo Radutsky (Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada Committee on National Health, Medical Care and Medical Insurance), representatives of the EU Delegation in Ukraine, representatives of the project implementing consortium GFA and THL, project Team Leader Predrag Duric and Key Expert Mohammed Abouelfarag.

During the meeting, the participants discussed the achievements and progress of project activities in the field of public health, blood safety, and communication. Furthermore, the registration of the draft law on the public health system N°4142 in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, which should become the basis of the public health system improvement, was discussed. The results of cooperation between the MoH and the UPHC, as well as a summary of the completed activities and results of the project, were particularly emphasized. In addition, 4 areas of work in the blood safety system and the events that took place were covered.

At the final stage, the key experts gave an outlook on the planned activities for the next six months which were discussed and agreed upon with the participants.

# Organisation of monitoring and evaluation, use of research results and information systems in public health



On September 16-18, 2020, the project team took part in the "Training on the organisation of monitoring and evaluation, use of research results and information systems in public health". Speakers and participants discussed the recent research in the field of non-communicable diseases, worked on the register of TB patients, and reviewed medical information systems, including HIV in Ukraine and e-Health. The impact of COVID-19 on public space was also discussed.

Among the speakers were Iryna Ageyeva (Head of Reform and Regional Development), Vladyslav Zbanatsky (Deputy Director-General of the Center for Public Health), Olena Bidovanets (Chief Specialist for

Viral Hepatitis and Substitution Maintenance Therapy Programs), Olena Siletska (Director of the Department of Socio-Political Research Ipsos Ukraine), and specialists in monitoring and evaluation of regional Public Health Centers. The training was an opportunity to present the ongoing activities of the Project and to present those who are involved at the regional level.

The event was organised by the Public Health Center of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine (UPHC) with the support of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the World Health Organisation, and the WHO European Office.

# The results of the KAP survey were presented in Ukraine

On October 20, 2020, the EU-funded Project "[Support to Ukraine for Developing a Modern Public Health System](#)" held the online webinar to discuss the results of the study "Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices on the Role of Policy Reform in the Public Health Sector in Ukraine".

The event was attended by the representatives of the Public Health Directorate of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine and the Public Health Center of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, representatives of international organisations, representatives of the laboratory centers of the Ministry of Health, and representatives of regional public health centers. At the event, international and national experts of the Project presented a report to the participants containing results and recommendations.

The study was conducted from July 2020 until August 2020 among employees of nine regional public health centers and nine laboratory centers in Kyiv and the regions.

The purpose of the KAP-survey was to investigate the viewpoint of key employees of existing public health

facilities on the role of public health and policy reform in this area in Ukraine. Most public health professionals have a fairly comprehensive vision of public health and believe that its priority is health protection. This topic should be the focus of activities of public health professionals in Ukraine. The survey also identified current key issues of public health, such as problems regarding the legal framework and governance; a lack of resources for the operation of the public health system; and a slow implementation of interventions in this area.

During the online webinar, the international expert of the Project, Olaf Horstick, instructed the participants about the development of a training plan for professionals, about the development of a conceptual document on continuous professional development with the allocation of time and budget; and about the concept of presenting the results of work, possibly in collaboration with universities, and further involvement of local universities in all education/innovation/capacity-building processes.

## The webinar on the assessment of the Ukrainian public health institutions was held

On October 23, 2020, the project experts introduced the national public health facilities assessment methodology for the rPHCs and regional laboratory centers' experts. Participants were provided with information about the preconditions, goals, and importance of evaluation in order to enhance a positive development of the public health system.

The webinar included the presentation of various assessment aspects: the assessment of human resources, the assessment of competencies and training needs, the assessment of institutional capacities, and the assessment of quality management. Both international and national experts acted as speakers: Tiina Laatikainen, Martin Rusnak, Deian Ostojic, Oksana Artemchuk, Markiyany Datsyshyn, Svitlana Pkhidenko.

# Improvement of rPHCs communication: virtual practice

High-quality communication is one of the critical components of the public health reform in Ukraine. Public health professionals need to know how to develop efficient communication strategies, how to plan crisis communication, and how to communicate information transparently to target audiences. For this reason, the project held between September-December 2020 virtual communication training modules for PR specialists from UPHC and regional public health centers (rPHCs).

The experts prepared a series of educational and practical training materials for the speakers. In particular, the plan of modules included the development of a communication strategy, a study of basic communication concepts and target audiences, communication campaigns, definitions of communication KPIs, working with social media

platforms, media relations, the development of public speaking skills, and crisis management.

The training included a theoretical part (lectures), practical exercises (rPHCs group work), and feedback sessions (the opportunity for participants to receive feedback and discuss further plans). During the workshops, the groups presented communication strategies, shared previous experiences, planned communication campaigns, created stakeholder maps, and held discussions. At the end of the training, each participant received a written assessment and a certificate.

The training was designed and conducted by the team of national and international experts Dmytro Konyk, Marko Lakhteenmaki, Christine Fenz, Iryna Yuryeva and Anastasiya Taroyants.

## How to prevent NCDs at the community level: a master class

On November 19 and December 1, 2020, the online master classes "Prevention of non-communicable diseases at the community level, implementation and evaluation of interventions" were held. The master classes were given by GFA international NCD experts from Finnish Institute for health and welfare (THL): Erkki Vartiainen, MD, Honorary Professor, Tiina Laatikainen, Professor, and Pekka Jousilahti, Research Professor. The experts

presented the key concepts, strategies, and theories of NCD prevention programs. Furthermore, they explained how to plan and implement such programs.

The participants of the master classes were specialists of the UPHC, rPHCs, MoH and laboratory centers. Each participant received a certificate of completion of a master class with international attendance.

## Trainings on diphtheria for healthcare workers: 4 training modules

From November 23 to 30, 2020, training modules on the current issue of epidemiological surveillance of diphtheria were held. There were four trainings in total (for the Northern, Southern, Eastern, and Western regions of Ukraine). Each training was attended by about 200 participants. There were family doctors, infectious disease doctors, epidemiologists, and microbiologists.

Participants learned about approaches to epidemiological surveillance of diphtheria and about different aspects of laboratory diagnosis in EU countries. Not only did the participants familiarise themselves with the Order of the Ministry of Health "On approval of the procedure

for diphtheria surveillance", but they also applied the provisions of the Order in situational tasks during practical exercises.

Among the trainers were experts of the Project "Support of Ukraine for the Development of the Modern Public Health System" Oksana Artemchuk and Anastasiya Taroyants along with the specialists of the Department of Epidemiological Surveillance, the Department of Immunisation and the Reference Laboratory of Microbiological and Parasitological Research of the Center of Public Health of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine.

# For the first time since independence, the Ukrainian blood safety system is being reformed with EU support



## Olga Stefanyshyna

Member of Parliament, member of Verkhovna Rada Committee on public health, medical assistance and medical insurance

Author of the Law on the Donation of Blood

On September 30, 2020, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine approved the law "On safety and quality of donor blood and blood components". With the help of this law, the existing system of blood donation, which has not changed for 25 years, will benefit from qualitative and radical transformation.

Hundreds of Ukrainians need safe and high-quality donor blood every day, which is sorely lacking in the country. According to the WHO, Ukraine has three times fewer donations than needed. Because 70% of donors are one-time donors, the blood is not always of high quality and safety. According to the data of the Kyiv School of Economics, up to 2,500 people are potentially infected each year during a blood transfusion. Therefore, the revision of the existing Soviet model, which has completely exhausted itself and has already become dangerous for the lives and health of patients, is a matter of national security.

The creation of this law required substantial time for the cooperation between MPs, the Ministry of health of Ukraine, experts of the EU-funded project "Support to Ukraine for Developing a Modern Public Health System", the National Health Service, representatives of blood establishments, patient organisations, and donor associations. Given the current circumstances, all efforts were made to make sure that this new law complies as much as possible with the relevant Directives of the European Union. Its purpose is not only to ensure blood safety, availability and a high quality of blood, but also to fulfill Ukraine's obligations under article 22 of Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU.

### WHY IS THIS LAW IMPORTANT AND WHAT IS GOING TO CHANGE IN THE BLOOD SYSTEM?

- 1. Donor blood will be of high quality and safe:** the blood will be tested and controlled according to the European standards. The licensing system will be introduced for entities that operate in the blood system and carry out blood collections. The Competent Authority which is introduced for the first time in Ukraine by this law will be responsible for these activities.
- 2. A Register of blood donors will be established as a part of eHealth.** The blood system will be computerised and integrated into the general health care system. This will allow to learn quickly about the existing temporary or permanent contraindications of a potential donor, get feedback from the donor, and it will help with tracing the path of donations - the route of each blood unit from the donor to the recipient.
- 3. The law is aimed at the development and promotion of voluntary non-remunerated blood donation.** The voluntary donation is in line with European donation practice and is recommended by the WHO, as it contributes to the safety and quality of blood because such donors are reliable, regular and they form an important "donor base".
- 4. The interests of the state and citizens of Ukraine in terms of supply of donor blood, its components, and blood products are prioritised.**
- 5. Bureaucratic barriers for donors are removed:** it will be possible to donate blood regardless of the place of residence registration. This also applies to foreigners and stateless individuals. This will significantly improve the access to blood donation and increase the number of regular donors.



## Tiina Laatikainen

Senior non-key expert in health education and promotion and training in public health, Research Professor

### CAN YOU SAY A COUPLE OF WORDS ABOUT THE THL, YOURSELF, AND YOUR PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS?

I am a medical doctor and work as a Professor of Health Promotion in the Institute of Public Health and Clinical Nutrition in the Medical Faculty of the University of Eastern Finland. I am also the Research Professor in the Department of Public Health Solutions in the National Institute for Health and Welfare in Finland (THL). THL is an independent research and expert organisation under the guidance of the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs in Finland. THL studies and monitors - and develops measures to promote - the well-being and health of the population in Finland. The institute gathers and produces information based on research and statistics and also provides expertise and solutions, which stakeholders can use to support their decision-making.

I have mainly done research and expert functions in the field of epidemiology and prevention of major public

health problems such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, memory disorders, asthma, and allergy. I have worked closely with the national and international working groups developing a methodology for health monitoring and coordinating several monitoring studies in different countries. I have long-term expertise in developing and conducting evidence-based lifestyle interventions. I have also coordinated the work of the WHO Collaborating Centre for Non-Communicable Disease Prevention, Health Promotion and Monitoring in Finland since 2002 and been the head since 2017. So far I have published over 400 peer-reviewed papers.

### IN THE PROJECT, YOU ARE LEADING THE ACTIVITY TO IDENTIFY TRAINING NEEDS. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THE TRAINING NEEDS OF PUBLIC HEALTH PROFESSIONALS?

Public health challenges and especially the means to prevent and manage those are extremely complex. Most of the current public health problems are

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closely related to our behaviour and embedded in our environment and culture. The knowledge needed to monitor the situation, find ways to influence the factors that contribute to both peoples' behaviour and their living environment, create partnerships and involve key stakeholders, communicate and interact in an effective way, and to have good leadership is extremely broad. It requires a good mixture of expertise and smooth collaboration between the specialists. The changing environment and circumstances, rapid digitisation, other technological developments and the changing culture of interaction and communication, such as social media, also create new challenges and needs for continuous capacity building.

## WHAT ARE THE MAIN PUBLIC HEALTH CHALLENGES IN FINLAND?

The health of the Finnish population nowadays is better than ever before. Life expectancy has increased continuously over the years and it is now 84,5 years for women and 79,2 years for men. Even though the occurrence of cardiovascular diseases has diminished in Finland since the 1970's, they are still the main cause of death - causing over 40% of all mortality. About 45% of disability pensions are caused by mental health problems. In addition, alcohol-related morbidity, injuries and accidents are notable causes of both death and functional impairment, particularly among men of working age. Some recent public health threats are the increasing prevalence of obesity together with related diseases such as type 2 diabetes.

## WHAT DID THE INITIAL ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC HEALTH EDUCATION IN UKRAINE REVEAL?

So far we have been only able to assess the current offer of public health training provided by some key educational institutions in Ukraine. There are already several master's and bachelor's training programmes available. The theoretical background of several public health topics is well covered. Regarding the content of the training programmes, it was noted that curricula are quite healthcare-oriented and that there is a strong emphasis on epidemic control, biosafety, and hygiene. However, the main challenges related to non-communicable diseases were also fairly well covered. Scientific aspects and methods, including biostatistics, were also well covered. In addition, the training included research projects and practical assessments. Less covered topics included health economics and economic evaluation; skills required for planning, managing, advocacy, and evaluation of practical work and activities; community-oriented content and topics focusing on intersectoral measures on disease prevention and health promotion; and social determinants of health, health inequalities and equity in health.

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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