



# 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

March 2023



## Oksana Koshalko, Head of the Epidemiology Department, UPHC

The topics covering communicable diseases and methods of reducing their impact on the population of Ukraine were among the priorities for the Public Health Center of Ukraine cooperation with the EU Project "Support to Ukraine for developing a modern public health system". The UPHC is actively engaged with the creation of a national surveillance system in Ukraine, and starting from 2020, the UPHC team has involved the international experts to assist with various analyses of the system's strengths and weaknesses, opportunities for its development and transformation.

Considering that our focus is aligning the Ukrainian health care system with European standards, it was important for the UPHC experts to pay significant

attention to analyses and bring the documents developed in the Verkhovna Rada and the Ministry of Health closer to the EU standards. Since the UPHC foundation its specialists have been working on improving legislation in the field of communicable diseases, and the project team has assisted with the development and adaptation of several draft laws and by-laws in recent years. The last few months have been particularly fruitful in regard to the by-laws to the Public Health Law, which was adopted in September 2022, particularly the draft orders related to epidemiological surveillance procedure, lists of communicable diseases subject to registration and criteria etc. Additionally, foreign colleagues contribute a lot with translations and development of technical guidelines on communicable disease surveillance based on international recommendations and best practices.

Another crucial area is training and continuous professional development of the personnel in the field. Intersectoral cooperation with Ukrainian

and international partners (WHO, EU and others) strengthens training of medical workers on topics like the rational use of antimicrobial drugs, handling of personal protective equipment, patient care, the environmental component in the field of antimicrobial resistance, such as the disposal of medical waste taking into account European norms, etc. Therefore, together with the project, we have developed and conducted a series of educational events for public health specialists, epidemiologists, laboratory representatives.

A particular highlight during the past years were the trainings on diphtheria and epidemiological surveillance, summarising the epidemiological season

2020-2021 for influenza and SARS-COV-2.

This complex approach that includes various measures is helpful to UPHC to determine the strategies of communicable disease surveillance; to record statistics on communicable diseases in the country of more than 60 nosologies; to monitor and evaluate the indicators of detected cases of HIV infection/AIDS, tuberculosis, and viral hepatitis B and C. These joint activities also support the UPHC staff in epidemiological investigations of communicable disease cases and in providing recommendations on anti-epidemic measures to public health institutions throughout Ukraine.

## Assessment of UPHC Capacities to inform on the Action Plan for capacity improvement

With the Public Health law approved in September 2022, the UPHC has been designated to be a leading public health expert institution in Ukraine, with numerous functions in public health, but also in other areas.

Upon the MoH request, an assessment of the UPHC capacities covering 10 essential public health operations (EPHOs) based on functions presented in the public health law was designed, and an online workshop based on the Delphi methodology was conducted with the Director General and Deputy Directors of the UPHC during winter 2022-2023. The assessment framework was structured using the following 6 modalities: organisational profile, leadership, strategic planning, measurement, analysis, and knowledge management, workforce focus and operation focus.

The results of this study were summarised in the report "Assessment of Institutional Capacities of UPHC with the Action Plan for Capacity Improvement" with suggested steps to be considered and implemented in the coming years.

This comprehensive assessment was shared with Deputy Minister Kuzin and the UPHC leadership in order to provide an effective quality assurance and quality improvement system in the area of public health that is based on the European standards. The Action Plan includes numerous measures that aim to further strengthen the position of the UPHC as the main public health expert institution in Ukraine.

# Set of by-laws drafted and reviewed by Project experts

As the development of bylaws is one of the critical elements to assist the creation of a sustainable epidemiological surveillance system for communicable and non-communicable diseases, the Project responded to the MoH and UPHC request and contributed to several legal documents in this field.

Thus, a set of bylaws was developed according to the priority list prepared by the MoH. Among them, legal documents dedicated to communicable diseases and related special health issues subject to registration were drafted; as well as documents dedicated to the procedure of mandatory epidemiological investigation in order to provide warning before the full outbreak of an epidemic.

Draft MoH Orders elaborated include the ones "On the approval of the Regulation on the Priority areas for research in public health", "On approval of the Regulation on the Public Health Coordination Council on how it functions", "On approval of the List of public health services and their structure", "On approval of the List of communicable diseases subject to mandatory epidemiological investigation in each case".

The Draft CMU Resolution "Procedure for Epidemiological Surveillance of Non-communicable Diseases" was also reviewed, together with a number of MoH draft orders. Additionally, the Project contributed to a set of the MoH orders dedicated to the regulation of the Public Health Coordination Council and regional councils, together with the list of public health services and their structure.

Specific attention was paid to nutrient profiles and conditions of use, which food or certain categories of food must comply with in order to make use of nutrition or health claims.

We anticipate that the provided expertise will assist Ukrainian public health institutions and authorities to build a strong and resilient epidemiological surveillance system for communicable and non-communicable diseases despite all the challenges Ukraine is going through during this year of the unprovoked and cruel war launched by the Russian Federation.

# «Your blood can fight. Become a donor»: the idea behind the all-Ukrainian campaign



## Ludmyla Hordon,

Deputy General Director  
of the Specialised State  
Institution "Ukrainian Center  
for Transplant Coordination"  
(UTCC)

After the beginning of a full-scale invasion, it became obvious that the usual work rhythm of the Ukrainian blood service, as well as the work with blood donors, required a different approach.

The national blood system managed successfully to cope with different circumstances, but war always creates new unique challenges. Blood has absolutely no alternative and is needed every day to save wounded defenders. Likewise, blood is needed every day for the treatment of civilian patients undergoing routine surgeries, childbirth or transplantation procedures. Therefore, in order to engage Ukrainians to reliably provide as steady supply of blood, an information campaign was initiated.

The slogan and logo of [the campaign](#) were not specially developed for this campaign. It happened that the street artist Hamlet Zinkivskyi from Kharkiv, after donating his blood for the frontline heroes, created the phrase "Your blood can fight. Become a donor" at the gates of the blood center in Kharkiv. We really liked this idea and decided to scale it up in our campaign. The artist, in return, granted the right to use his work, hoping that it would inspire other people to donate blood.

The objective of the campaign it is to increase blood reserves; however, this should not come with the expense of exposing blood donors to danger if they gather in queues at blood centers subject to an attack. Therefore, emphasis was made on strengthening the donor base of the blood centers and regulating the blood donors scheduling process.

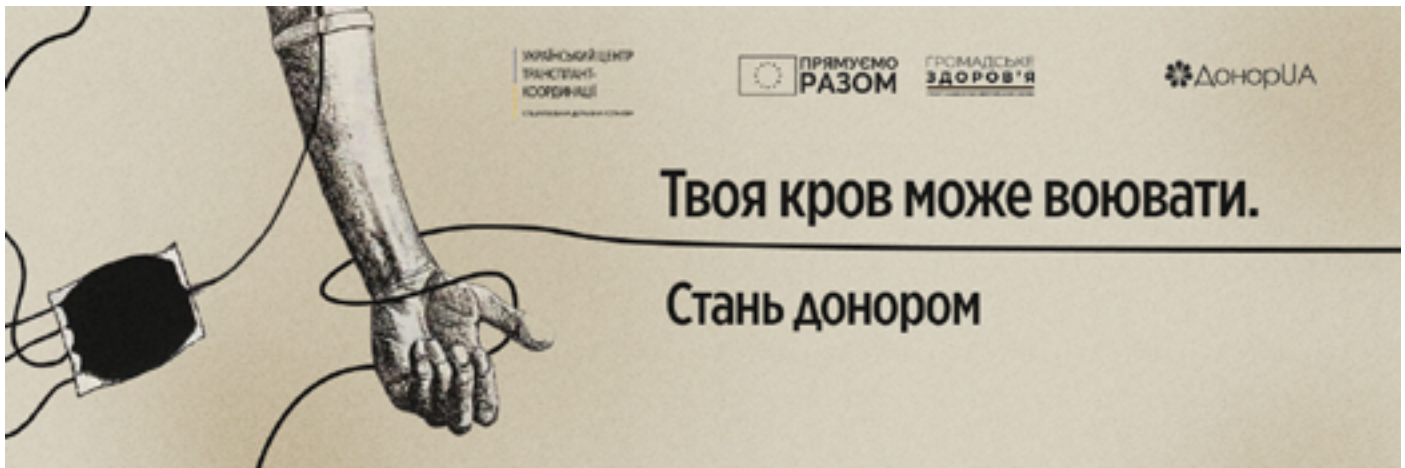
Almost each city has blood centers or other medical facilities where one can donate blood. If the blood supply decreases in the region or there is an acute shortage of a specific blood group, medical institutions report this on their official pages or in social networks. Any person can sign up at the donor register online through one of our partners' platforms: [www.donor.ua](http://www.donor.ua) or [www.helsi.pro](http://www.helsi.pro).

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](#)). In the second stage of the campaign, we engaged also the shopping malls with the radio broadcasting message: "The war doesn't have holidays. Your blood can fight".

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In wartime conditions, blood reserves must be constantly replenished, and thanks to the active blood donors base that we can respond to the needs of blood centers, invite people to donate, prepare

supplies in time and deliver them to those regions in need. Joining the registry allows rational and organised involvement of blood donors and use of medical resources.





## Oleksandr Serhienko,

Deputy General Director  
of the Specialised State  
Institution "Ukrainian Center  
for Transplant Coordination"  
(UTCC)

*Oleksandr is the head of the operational headquarters at the Ministry of Health of Ukraine for the coordination of activities in the field of blood donation and blood components, functioning of the blood system under martial law, transfusion medicine specialist of the highest category, Ph.D with many years of practical, scientific and pedagogical experience in the field of transfusion, experience as an expert at international organizations in the areas of "transfusiology", "blood safety", "quality management systems in blood service".*

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

The main goal of the development of the national blood system is the transformation of the existing blood system in accordance with the requirements of European Union acquis in order to achieve self-sufficiency of the state with safe and high-quality donor blood and blood components, the financial and economic efficiency of the system, a clear distribution of the spheres of responsibility of the participants

of the blood system. The list of these participants include: the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, the National Transfusion Center and National Transfusion Committee, the Competent authority, entities of the blood system, health care institutions that provide transfusion services to patients. The national blood system development is implemented by the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, as the central body of the executive power that establishes the policy in the field of blood donation and the functioning of the blood system and state institution "UTCC", as a specialised state institution that promotes the implementation of the policy of the Ministry of Health in this area.

As a result of the implemented changes, an effective blood and blood component donation culture will have been developed in the country based on the principle of voluntary unpaid donation. Blood system entities should produce sufficient quantities of safe and high-quality donor blood and blood components, health care institutions should organise transfusion services, and each patient in the country should receive equal and timely access to safe and high-quality donor blood and blood components in sufficient quantities,

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as well as have access to a quality transfusion service.

## HOW WERE ACTIVITIES OF UTCC REORGANISED DURING WAR?

In accordance with the regulations, approved by the order of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, UTCC ensures the coordination of the activities of entities of the blood system and health care facilities that provide transfusion services. Under the conditions of martial law, an operational headquarters of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine was established to coordinate activities in the field of donation of blood and blood components. UTCC coordinates and promotes the activities of the entities of the blood system aimed to meet the needs of the health care system in donor blood and blood components, in particular meeting the needs of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and law enforcement agencies under such difficult circumstances. All entities of the blood system have switched to the mode of uninterrupted operation in order to sufficiently meet the emerging needs. The activities are being controlled, risks are analysed constantly, measures are taken to mobilise the donor basis, and legal acts related not only to issues of European integration but also those that contribute to the resolution of issues related to the provision of transfusion assistance under martial law have been developed.

Cooperation with foreign partners and international organisations has been established regarding the provision of consumables for blood system entities, and I would like to express my big gratitude for this. I would like to especially thank the Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine and the representatives of the international technical assistance project "Support to Ukraine for developing a modern public health system" for cooperation and technical support during the war. I would like to express my gratitude to the civil organisations, and first of all to 'DonorUA', as well as to private partners for supporting the blood system in wartime.

## HOW DID THE DYNAMICS OF BLOOD DONATION

## CHANGE AFTER THE FULL-SCALE INVASION AND HOW IS THE DONATION PROCESS ORGANISED UNDER THE CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES?

People of Ukraine are always quick to respond to social problems, in particular, regarding the needs in donor blood and blood components. The war showed the cohesion of the Ukrainian society, which in every possible way helps not only the military and civilians in combat zones, but also at home, which is a reliable support for the front. Starting from February 24, 2022, many people have actively participated in donation of blood and blood components and most of them became regular donors and continue to donate to this day. Moreover, the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, together with UTCC, the EU funded project of international technical assistance and partner civil organizations organised and implemented a national information campaign to attract voluntary unpaid blood donors, namely the campaign titled "Your blood can fight. Become a donor" and "The war doesn't have holidays. Your blood can fight." As a result, the number of voluntary unpaid donors of blood and blood components has increased significantly, for which I express special thanks to all involved partners and donors of blood and blood components. Currently, thanks to the active donors' support, the blood system in Ukraine meets the civilian and military needs for donor blood and blood components, and Ukraine has not yet exported donor blood and blood components from other countries.

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

In order to ensure the safety for donors under the conditions of rocket and artillery attacks, measures are taken to ensure the planning of visits for donation and the safety of the donors themselves. That's why NGO "DonorUA" and Helsi provide the possibility of online registration of donors and persons who have expressed a desire to become donors. Furthermore, donors can contact the blood establishments by phone and find out about the need for a donation. Likewise,

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the employee of the blood establishment informs the donor about the need for donation and, if necessary, provides brief information about the preparation for donation and the main contraindications for donation.

In order to organise transfusion assistance in war zones and adjacent territories, as well as to provide medical aid for victims of rocket and artillery shelling, regulatory and legal acts were approved that regulate the use of preserved donor blood O(I)Rh(-) at pre-hospital and early hospital levels as well as use of lyophilised (dry plasma). Besides, the transportation of donor blood and blood components to destinations is organised and ensured as needed.

**WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT DO YOU EXPECT FROM THE EU FUNDED PROJECT "SUPPORT TO UKRAINE FOR DEVELOPING A MODERN PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM" IN TERMS OF EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE REGARDING THE REFORM OF THE BLOOD SAFETY SYSTEM?**

I am grateful to my colleagues from the EU project

for their support and help, and of course, it would be great to have such support in the future. We need and count on support with changing the financial and economic model of the blood system, implementing the information space of the blood system, introducing changes in national statistical reporting, preparing and supporting health care institutions to provide transfusion services, implementing a hemovigilance system, trainings for representatives of the Competent authority and UTCC on compliance inspections in terms of license requirements using the EuBIS tool (European standards and criteria for the inspection of blood establishments), the establishment of a reference laboratory, one of the functions of which is to confirm the results of testing for transfusion-transmitted infections and immunohematological studies, the restoration of persons, previously deferred from donation, based on the testing results.





## Vitalii Mylnychuk, UPHC communications unit head

YOU HAVE BEEN COORDINATING THE UPHC COMMUNICATION TEAM SINCE OCTOBER 2022 AND JOINED THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY OF THE INSTITUTION ALREADY AT THE FINAL STAGE. WOULD YOU CONSIDER THIS DOCUMENT COMPREHENSIVE? DOES IT COVER ALL THE IMPORTANT ASPECTS IN THE FIELD OF UPHC COMMUNICATIONS?

I must admit that the tremendous work was done and a large array of data was analysed. The document in the final version turned out to be really voluminous in terms of the established direction for the organisation to move forward. The strategy will make it possible to bring the UPHC to a qualitatively new level of communications and reach the expert potential of the UPHC personnel. Additionally, several communication strategies in the areas of non-communicable diseases, tuberculosis management and treatment, antimicrobial resistance and other important areas of public health, which will be included in the Center's strategic communication document, are about to be approved soon.

WHAT WOULD YOU CHANGE OR IMPROVE IN UPHC COMMUNICATION? WHAT KIND OF EXTERNAL EXPERT ASSISTANCE DO YOU THINK COULD BE USEFUL IN THIS REGARD?

One of the basic principles, according to which the UPHC communication strategy will be implemented, is modernity. We will try to implement the latest methods for the most efficient work. Therefore, we will also need external specialists' assistance. This is applicable to us, as communicators, as well as to the program heads, who must not only focus on the implementation of program tasks, but also evolve in the field of public communications.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN CHALLENGES THE UPHC COMMUNICATION TEAM FACES, AND HOW DO YOU OVERCOME THEM?

The global task for us is to form a new culture of public health engaging UPHC resources. We understand that this is not even a matter of two or three years. However, we have an example of other countries that are quite successful with similar work, and are ready to share their experience. We also work daily to minimise the consequences of war, which significantly affected the well-being of Ukrainian citizens and caused serious challenges.

WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR COMMUNICATIONS? DO ALL GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS NEED A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY, PARTICULARLY IN THE PUBLIC HEALTHCARE?

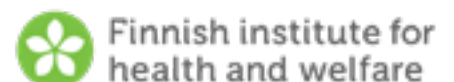
There is a belief that communications in the public sector are too slow, too bureaucratic and not creative at all. We observe a trend where various public authorities and public institutions are willing to invest time and resources into communications.

Communication strategies are mandatory for all organisations working with people, because responsibility and openness to the audience is crucial for effective work and progress.

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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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