

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 continues its activities to assist Ukraine with a focus on advancing its progress towards EU accession under Component 1 and supporting the establishment of a modern Blood Safety System under Component 2.

Project Newsletter December 2024



European Integration of Ukraine: Healthcare conference took place in Kyiv

In the face of war, Ukraine continues to modernise its health system in pursuit of dual objectives: defending its sovereignty and building a public health system (PHS) in line with EU norms. To this end, on 16 October, Kyiv hosted the conference **“European Integration of Ukraine: Healthcare”**, organised by the Ministry of Health of Ukraine (MoH), funded by the European Union within the framework of the project **“Support to Ukraine for Developing a Modern Public Health System”**, implemented in Ukraine by GFA Consulting Group GmbH in consortium with the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL).

The event became a significant milestone and underscored Ukraine’s determination to modernise and develop a sustainable public health system capable of ensuring disease prevention and control standards in line with EU legislation, requirements and practices.

The agenda of the conference focused on aligning Ukraine’s health system with EU standards and legislation.

The conference revolved around four critical themes as part of the strive for European integration: public health and the blood system, Ukraine’s achievements in adoption of European standards in medical services, transformation of the Ukrainian pharmaceutical sector and European financial and investment opportunities in Ukrainian healthcare.

Aiming for Integration Despite Ongoing Challenges

The discussions sought to promote political dialogue on aligning Ukraine’s public health system with EU standards including blood safety and emergency preparedness, and explore European financial and investment opportunities to bolster Ukraine’s health infrastructure.



European Integration of Ukraine: Healthcare conference took place in Kyiv

The event attracted high-level officials from the European Commission, represented by the following health sector experts:

- **Stella Kyriakides**
European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety
- **Borisa Falatar**
Team Lead of European Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority
- **Marlene Rosemarie Madsen**
Deputy Director of the Ukraine Service, Directorate-General European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations
- **Sandra Gallina**
Director General for Health and Food Safety, European Commission
- **Stefan Schleuning**
Head of Cooperation Programs at the EU Delegation to Ukraine
- **Rene Steiner**
Counsellor, the EU Delegation to Ukraine;
- **Mohammed Farouk**
Key Expert on Blood Safety of the EU Project "Support to Ukraine for Developing a Modern Public Health System"

Speakers included key political leaders of Ukraine's European integration process, representatives from the European Commission, including the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) and the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR). Delegates from the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA), the EU Delegation to Ukraine, WHO Country Office in Ukraine, pharmaceutical business leaders, healthcare professionals, and other experts also took part in the event.

Their key message was clear: European integration is not just a distant goal but a current priority.

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We know that the future of Ukraine and its citizens is in the European Union... Negotiations will require leadership, determination, and focus. Getting reform right will be key. Our support for Ukraine in this process is a given. These collective efforts reflect our profound commitment to supporting Ukraine. We stand together in your fight for freedom and democracy, and we will work together towards a future of stability, resilience, and partnership.

Stella Kyriakides

European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety

Adapting Reform to Wartime Challenges

Balancing health reforms with the realities of war presents daunting challenges. The Minister of Health of Ukraine, **Dr Viktor Liashko** and the Head of the Parliamentary Health Committee, **Dr Mykhailo Radutskyi**, acknowledged that implementing reforms during wartime was complex but essential.



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To boost public engagement, the project is working with the UTCC on a new donor platform supported by a media campaign, SEO optimisation, and an instructional video tutorial. On the digital front, preparations are under way to test logistics and registration modules of eKrov system, laying the groundwork for system integration with the UTCC and recruiting professionals to oversee quality assurance.

A Future of Hope and Partnership

According to **Marlene Rosemarie Madsen**, Deputy Director of the Ukraine Service, Directorate-General on European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, the EU offers financial and legislative support through initiatives like EU4Health, granting Ukraine access to over €5.3 billion for health reforms. These funds will address immediate needs while laying the foundation for long-term recovery.

Innovations and Lessons for Europe

Despite the ongoing war, Ukraine's public health system is pioneering innovations that could benefit Europe. One notable achievement is the adoption of European stroke management protocols, which has expanded access to life-saving treatments like thrombectomy. Representatives from leading public and private healthcare institutions shared success stories, highlighting the country's ability to maintain high-quality medical services amid economic and political turmoil. These institutions not only employ cutting-edge equipment and advanced global practices but also address the needs of displaced and vulnerable persons. Moreover, they are increasingly attracting investment in healthcare infrastructure, showcasing Ukraine's potential as a rising player in the sector.

Commitment to Deeper Integration

Summing up, Dr Mohammed Farouk highlighted three main outcomes of the event:



Firstly, Ukraine demonstrated its commitment to bridge legal, operational, and structural gaps in healthcare to align with EU standards, not only for future EU membership but also to enhance healthcare quality for its citizens. Despite the war, Ukraine is advancing on both fronts — defending the country and meeting EU requirements. Secondly, the discussions underscored the EU's continued support for Ukraine, both during the war and in its integration efforts, particularly in public health. Finally, the event showcased Ukraine's resilience and contributions, such as maintaining healthcare services under wartime conditions and advancing its pharmaceutical sector. These efforts illustrate Ukraine's potential to add value to the EU by securing essential medicines, sharing best practices, and demonstrating how to sustain public health system during emergencies.

Mohammed Farouk

Key Expert on Blood Safety

The conference powerfully highlighted Ukraine's unwavering commitment to aligning its public health system with EU standards—not merely as a route to EU membership, but as a vital means of enhancing healthcare services for its citizens. Collaborative projects are actively bridging the legal and operational gaps essential for this integration. As Ukraine forges ahead, it is clear that the pursuit of European values and standards is not just an aspiration; it is a transformative journey that promises to uplift the nation and secure a healthier future for all its people.

Link to the conference website: <https://www.ua-euintegration-health.com/en>

The Project supported the participation of a high-level delegation from the Ministry of Health of Ukraine in a study visit to Denmark

The Project “Support to Ukraine for Developing a Modern Public Health System” organised and supported the visit to Denmark of a delegation from the Ministry of Health, led by **Minister Viktor Liashko**. This visit aimed to enhance collaboration and foster knowledge exchange on mental health and medical services. Ms. Valentyna Kovalchuk, Advisor to the Deputy Minister of Health, reflected on the visit, highlighting its significance in strengthening partnerships and advancing the development of strengthening Ukrainian-Danish Cooperation in Healthcare sector.



Ukraine continues to strengthen collaboration with its strategic international partners in healthcare, unlocking new possibilities for the reform of its medical system. A recent working visit by the Ukrainian delegation to Denmark marked a significant milestone in enhancing cooperation between the two countries.

One of the primary outcomes was the **signing of the Agreement on Strategic Sectoral Cooperation in Healthcare between Ukraine and Denmark**. The document builds on agreements established in February 2024 during the signing of the Security Cooperation Agreement by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen. The agreement outlines key goals, including the integration of Ukraine’s healthcare system into the European framework, the development of horizontal partnerships between medical institutions of both countries, and enhanced collaboration in mental health, pharmaceuticals, epidemiological surveillance, and combating antimicrobial resistance.

Another significant achievement was the **signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the State Service of Ukraine on Medicines and the Danish Medicines Agency**. This partnership aims to unite efforts in combating counterfeit medicines and fosters knowledge exchange on drug quality and safety. Joint work on GMP/GDP compliance and the development of inspection activities opens up new opportunities for both sides.



A special highlight of the visit was the engagement with **Mary Elizabeth Hospital**, a key partner for Ukrainian medicine. The hospital provides free treatment and rehabilitation for Ukrainian military personnel and civilians affected by the war. Minister of Health of Ukraine Viktor Liashko emphasized the significance of this support, noting that nearly 200 Ukrainian patients have already received assistance. Additionally, the hospital actively collaborates with Kyiv Regional Children’s Hospital as part of the International Medical Partnership initiative under the auspices of the First Lady of Ukraine, Olena Zelenska. The cooperation focuses on critical areas such as burn treatment, orthopedics, and traumatology.



The Project supported the participation of a high-level delegation from the Ministry of Health of Ukraine in a study visit to Denmark

The delegation held a meeting with the leadership of the **Danish Health Authority**, where Denmark's 10-year mental health action plan was presented. The Ukrainian side shared its priorities in this field, particularly concerning the rehabilitation of military personnel and affected civilians.

The delegation also visited a **psychiatric hospital in Slagelse**, achieving an agreement on a partnership with Ukraine's Institute of Forensic Psychiatry. This collaboration will enable Ukrainian specialists to adopt Danish expertise in patient behaviour management and violence risk assessment.



At the Statens Serum Institut, Danish experts presented their programs for monitoring antimicrobial drug usage and controlling bacterial resistance. The Ukrainian delegation shared its own experience in combating the spread of antimicrobial-resistant pathogens, and both sides discussed strategies for future collaboration.



Discussions at the **Danish Medicines Agency** addressed the challenges and priorities of Ukraine as an EU candidate country. The Danish side shared valuable insights into pharmaceutical market regulation, pricing, and drug reimbursement systems, providing a critical resource for Ukraine's healthcare transformation.



The working visit to Denmark provided a powerful boost to Ukrainian-Danish relations in healthcare. The agreements and understandings signed during the visit pave the way for the transformation of Ukraine's healthcare system, the improvement of service quality, and the adoption of European standards.

The Ukrainian delegation returned with crucial agreements and valuable insights that will serve as a foundation for advancing strategic partnerships in 2025 and beyond.

Valentyna Kovalchuk

Advisor to the Deputy
Minister of Health

Strengthening blood donor recruitment: national training held in Kyiv for specialists of blood centres

Ukraine is making strides toward **establishing blood donor recruitment units** in all blood centres, as part of its broader initiative outlined in the Strategy for the development of voluntary nonremunerated donation of blood and blood components until 2028. These units are designed to build a reliable pool of regular voluntary donors and ensure that patients across Ukraine receive transfusion services promptly and according to their needs.



The recruitment units will be pivotal in maintaining continuous engagement with potential and regular blood donors. They are tasked with developing and implementing communication strategies and campaigns to attract voluntary, unpaid donors. Furthermore, they will ensure that blood donation sites are designed to meet donor expectations, creating a positive environment that encourages regular participation. Collaboration with NGOs will also be a priority, supporting the broader development of voluntary blood donation initiatives across the country.

On September 16-17, 2024, the project in collaboration with the UTCC conducted a two-day training session in Kyiv to strengthen the capacity of donor recruitment professionals in all regional blood centers. The event featured speakers from the Ministry of Health (MoH), the Ukrainian Transfusion and Coordination Center (UTCC), NGOs, and project experts. Presentations focused on sharing international best practices to promote a unified approach for recruiting blood donors across Ukraine.

The training aimed to equip blood center specialists with the knowledge and strategies necessary to enhance donor recruitment efforts, ensuring consistent practices nationwide.



Project international senior experts focused their presentation on sharing foreign experiences and exchanging best practices, with the aim of fostering a unified approach for recruiters responsible for attracting blood donors across Ukraine.

At the same time, national experts have made presentations dedicated to topics of development of scripts for effective communication with donors, building external and internal communication strategic tasks of the recruitment service, and presented results of an empirical study "Personal characteristics of blood donors".

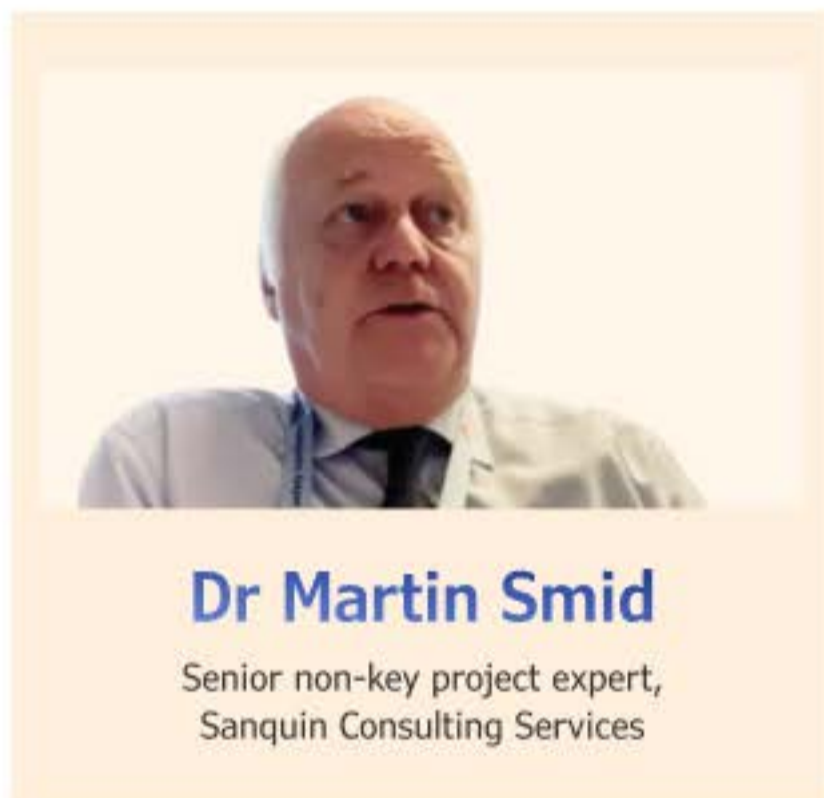
Additionally, the **ARTDONATION 2024 poster exhibition** continued at Zoloti Vorota metro station. This exhibition features 27 winning creative works from the ARTDONATION 2024 poster contest, highlighting the importance of voluntary donation.



Implementation of Good Practice Guidelines (GPG) and Quality Management System (QMS) in blood banking

On 9-11 October, an online training was conducted in collaboration with the UTCC, focusing on quality management in blood systems and highlighting Sanquin's experience in the Netherlands.

Key topics included the EU directives regarding quality systems and compliance, significance of quality systems, auditing processes, and change control to ensure the safety and proper composition of blood products. The team of experts and participants discussed the development of a feedback process, essential skills for auditors, and the potential for serious adverse events during blood collection, processing, testing, and distribution. The event attracted around 200 participants from Ukrainian healthcare facilities.



Key highlights of the training included Sanquin's experience in blood systems management, importance of quality systems, compliance with EU Directives, internal audits and risk assessment, feedback and continuous improvement, validation and change control, addressing serious adverse events, multidisciplinary approaches to risk assessment, and updated versions of the EDQM manual.



The training sessions underscored the critical role of quality management systems in ensuring the safety and effectiveness of blood services. By sharing experiences, discussing challenges, and focusing on compliance with EU directives, participants were equipped with the knowledge and tools necessary for improving blood system quality management. Overall, the sessions fostered collaborative discussions and knowledge sharing on best practices in blood system quality management.



The Project supported participation of the representatives of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine in the 17th European Public Health Conference in Lisbon, Portugal

On 12-15 November 2024, the 17th European Public Health Conference was held in Lisbon, bringing together international public health experts and becoming a key platform for discussing current challenges, innovative solutions and strategies in the field of healthcare. The conference was held under the motto "Sailing the waves of European public health: exploring the sea of innovation".

The delegation of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine actively participated in the event with the support of the EU project "Support to Ukraine in developing a modern public health system". The delegation consisted of **Tetiana Skapa**, Acting Director of the Department of Public Health; **Lesia Ukrainets**, Head of the Department of International Cooperation and EU Integration; **Natalia Sokurenko**, Head of the Department of Human Environment Safety, Department of Public Health; and **Alona Vydiuk**, Junior Non-Key Legal Expert of the EU project.



The conference focused on such important topics as the prevention of non-communicable diseases, combating antimicrobial resistance, improving mental health, overcoming health inequalities in times of crisis, adapting health systems to the challenges of climate change and strengthening their resilience, etc. The key blocks of the conference were:

- Innovations in Public Health: From Research to Action and Policy;
- Health Without Borders: Global Health Challenges and Sustainable Solutions;
- Health Equity: Bridging the Gaps to Universal Coverage;
- Transforming Health Systems: Strength, resilience, efficiency, and mental health issues: Advances in public mental health;
- Inclusive health: Addressing the needs of migrants, LGBT and minorities: easing the burden;
- Responding to the Threat of Chronic Diseases, and Health Policy: Participation in public debate and data-driven decision-making: Estimates for Informed Policymaking and Forecasting etc.

Among the important events attended by the representatives of the Ministry of Health delegation was the roundtable 'Future EU health priorities', organised by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE). The participants discussed key challenges and strategic directions of development, including the fight against infectious diseases, overcoming inequalities in access to healthcare services, and addressing long-term challenges such as an ageing population and climate changes.

The Project supported participation of the representatives of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine in the 17th European Public Health Conference in Lisbon, Portugal

The meeting with Isabel de la Mata, Senior Advisor on Health and Crisis Management at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG Health and Food Safety), was particularly valuable, as she stressed on the importance of strengthening cooperation between countries to achieve common goals.

Sessions organised by the European Health and Digital Agency (HaDEA) presented transnational climate change studies on health, human resource development programmes and pilot projects on the integration of digital tools into medical practice in EU member countries.

The conference discussed numerous aspects of public health that are important for Ukraine's integration into the European space and cooperation with the EU.

The thematic blocks focused on improving data-driven policies and integrating inclusive approaches to support national minorities and vulnerable populations, such as migrants and LGBT+ groups.

Prevention of non-communicable diseases received special attention in the context of combating cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and other chronic diseases, which are the leading causes of death in the world. The panel 'Easing the Burden: Responding to the Threat of Chronic Diseases' provided participants with an opportunity to share experiences and ideas on developing effective prevention programmes. Mental health topics were discussed within the block 'Mental Health Matters. Advances in Public Mental Health', which highlighted the latest initiatives to support the mental well-being of the society.



The Ukrainian delegation of the Ministry of Health actively participated in discussions and sessions related to the integration of European approaches into national healthcare systems. The gained experience will become an important asset to the reform of the public health system in Ukraine. Participation in the conference laid a solid foundation for further cooperation between Ukraine and the EU in the field of public health.

As part of a broader initiative to support the development of a modern blood transfusion system, a Ukrainian Delegation participated in a study visit organised by the Project to the **Belgian Red Cross - Flanders Blood Facilities and Sanquin, the Netherlands' national blood supply organisation.**

The objective of the study visit, that was held from **October 28 to November 1, 2024**, was to provide insights into blood supply organization, screening, collection, quality management, and donor operations to support Ukraine's public health system development.

Belgian Red Cross - Flanders Blood Facilities (October 28–29)

In Belgium, the delegation visited key blood facilities and participated in sessions on blood collection, mobile blood drives, and quality management.

Presentations covered:

- Routine operations of the Belgian blood facilities and donor centers.
- Quality Management Systems (QMS) and hemovigilance, highlighting protocols for maintaining blood safety.
- Hands-on visits to mobile blood drives and labs to see processes for donor engagement and blood screening in real-time.



Sanquin, Netherlands (October 31–November 1)

At Sanquin in Amsterdam, the Ukrainian delegation was introduced to Sanquin's advanced processes in blood collection, supply chain management, and quality assurance.

Tours of Sanquin's National Screening Lab and processing facilities allowed the delegation to observe screening, processing, and release management.

Interactive sessions focused on transfusion education, Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), and quality release management. Sanquin's donor engagement and operational strategies offered practical insights into maintaining a reliable and safe blood supply.

The study visit equipped the Ukrainian delegation with valuable tools and frameworks for enhancing blood services in Ukraine. By observing the Belgian and Dutch systems, the delegation gained a deeper understanding of:

- Implementing robust quality management practices to ensure the safety of blood products.
- Strengthening supply chain logistics to meet healthcare demands efficiently.
- Building a donor-centric approach that emphasizes donor care, retention, and satisfaction.



Olena Matiuk

Deputy Director General for Quality of Medical Services, UTCC



The study visits and online QMS training highlighted the importance of an integrated approach to quality management in Ukraine's blood system, emphasizing continuous process improvement through data analysis and feedback. Key lessons included the use of tools to monitor KPIs and implementing risk management systems within QMS. In practice, we have already adopted internal audits to ensure compliance with quality standards and started applying the CAPA methodology to address non-conformities. During the visits, we built connections with institutions willing to offer mentoring and advisory support and explored opportunities for collaborative training exchanges and expert consultations.

Looking Ahead

The study tour covered a wide array of essential topics, from routine operations and quality management to advanced laboratory practices, thus marking an important step in fostering international partnerships for healthcare advancement, and the Ministry of Health of Ukraine aims to incorporate many of these best practices into its strategy for the development of the national healthcare system.



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Liashko remarked that, due to the war and ongoing health reforms, Ukraine's path to EU membership would unfold in its own unique way. However, this required a shift in mindset among all Ukrainians. The minister's key message to the delegates was that EU accession necessitated not only accepting European standards but also embracing its values. In his remarks, Dr Liashko emphasised the collaborative effort among government bodies to ensure that all Ukrainians can access free and quality healthcare services. He urged participants not to wait for ideal legislation, noting that future EU membership would necessitate further legal adjustments, particularly regarding the use of artificial intelligence in healthcare, and stressed the importance of being prepared for these changes.

Dr Radutskyi echoed this sentiment, emphasising that while the health reforms had faced setbacks, they remained the only way forward for Ukraine to fully integrate into the EU.

Despite the devastation of war, the Ministry of Health of Ukraine has made strides in areas such as public health, pharmaceutical reforms, and the digitalisation of healthcare. These initiatives highlight the resilience of a nation that refuses to be defined by conflict alone.

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Ukraine continues to move confidently towards European integration by implementing the practices and standards of the European space... Only through collaboration can we strengthen our public health system and establish a political dialogue to address global challenges effectively.

Maryna Slobodnichenko

Minister of Health of Ukraine for
European Integration

Public Health and the Blood System

One of the conference's key panels focused on modernising Ukraine's public health system and overhauling its blood transfusion framework to prepare for emergencies. Speakers stressed Ukraine's shift from paid to voluntary blood donation, aligning with the European Union's updated regulations on Substances of Human Origin (SoHO). **Dr Mohammed Farouk**, Key Expert on Blood Safety of EU Project "Support to Ukraine for Developing a Modern Public Health System", explained how these reforms signalled Ukraine's commitment to meeting the EU health standards.



During an interview, Mr. Abouelfarag elaborated on the ongoing collaboration between the EU project "Support to Ukraine for Developing a Modern Public Health System" and Specialised State Institution "Ukrainian Transplant Coordination Centre" (UTCC). The project not only strengthens blood transfusion safety, quality, and availability of blood but also ensures Ukraine's public health reforms align with EU standards at both the legislative and operational levels.

A major element of this initiative involves synchronising Ukraine's blood safety framework with the EU's new Regulation No. 2024/1938 on SoHO. Project experts are conducting a gap analysis to identify discrepancies between Ukrainian and EU regulations, crafting an updated action plan to address areas such as quality management in blood services.

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 continues its activities to assist Ukraine with a focus on advancing its progress towards EU accession under Component 1 and supporting the establishment of a modern Blood Safety System under Component 2.

