

SUPPORT TO UKRAINE FOR DEVELOPING A MODERN PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM

A project funded by the European Union and implemented by GFA Consulting Group GmbH in consortium with the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL).

Project Newsletter March 2025



Supporting the Creation of a Resilient Public Health System for Ukraine: A Project Legacy

The project "Support to Ukraine for Developing a Modern Public Health System" has played a pivotal role in advancing **Ukraine's health reforms**, aligning its **public health and blood safety systems** with European standards, and strengthening resilience in the face of unprecedented challenges. Since 2019, we have worked closely with Ukrainian institutions, providing expert support in **legal approximation, capacity building, and strengthening the roles** of the Public Health Centre of Ukraine and Ukrainian Centre for Transplant Coordination.

The adoption of key legislative reforms, the **modernisation of the public health and blood transfusion systems**, and **Ukraine's deeper integration** into EU health networks reflect the commitment and dedication of all stakeholders involved.

We extend our gratitude to the **European Union** for its unwavering support, to our **Ukrainian partners** for their relentless efforts, and to every professional who contributed to this shared success. The foundation we have built will not only support **Ukraine's EU accession journey** but will also ensure a sustainable and effective public health system for future generations.

The **transformation of Ukraine's blood safety system** has been a cornerstone of the project 'Support to Ukraine for Developing a Modern Public Health System'. Over the past years, we have worked hand in hand with Ukrainian institutions to align the country's blood system with European standards, ensuring higher **quality, safety, and sustainability**. The adoption of the Law 'On Safety and Quality of Donor Blood and Blood Components' and alignment of regulatory frameworks mark significant progress toward an **EU-compliant system**.

Despite the immense challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing full-scale invasion, the **resilience and commitment** of Ukraine's health professionals have been truly remarkable.

Together, among other achievements, we have strengthened **voluntary non-remunerated blood donation**, created a **blood transfusion competent authority**, enhanced the blood transfusion quality management system, developed **national donor registries**, and implemented **digital solutions** to enhance the efficiency and transparency of the blood system.

As we conclude this remarkable initiative, we remain confident that Ukraine will continue its path toward a **modern, people-centred health system**, fully integrated into the European community.



Dr Predrag Duric

Project Team Leader, Key Expert on Public Health

This project has laid a solid groundwork for the future, ensuring that Ukraine's blood safety system remains **robust, self-sufficient, and aligned with EU best practices**. As Ukraine continues its European integration journey, these reforms will play a crucial role in securing a healthier future for all.



Dr Mohammed Farouk

Key Expert on Blood Safety

Voices on Impact: Reflections on the project journey

I have accompanied and observed the project from a distance for almost 6 years and I would like to thank the Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine for entrusting **GFA Consulting Group GmbH** and its **partner Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL)** with the provision of technical advisory services to assist **Ukrainian health reforms**. It is hard to believe that the project is coming to an end in May this year.

We are truly impressed how the health authorities in Ukraine have used the support provided by the Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine to drive forward reforms in both the public health as well as the blood transfusion system. The manifold results and achievements have been mentioned in previous newsletters, and it is worth remembering that the Ukrainian **willingness to reform** has not been stopped by either the Covid-19 pandemic – which heavily restricted movement of experts and redirected government funds – nor the Russian aggression of Ukraine early 2022.

The engagement of the Ukrainian partner institutions, experts and project team despite these external challenges has not only been **relentless** and driven by a **high amount of motivation**, but has also been a source of inspiration for the health expert team here in Hamburg.

The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) has been a valued partner in the EU-funded Technical Assistance project "Support to Ukraine for Developing a Modern Public Health System," led by GFA Consulting Group GmbH, since the project's inception in May 2019. As a governmental research and expert agency specialising in health and social policy, THL plays a crucial role in supporting the Finnish government with evidence-based policymaking. In this capacity, THL serves as a **peer institution** to the **Public Health Centre of Ukraine (UPHC)**.

Throughout the project, THL has provided significant support to GFA Consulting Group GmbH in the implementation of activities, contributing technical expertise under **Component 1 (Support for the consolidation and empowerment of the Public Health Centre of Ukraine)** and **Component 3 (Project communication and visibility)**.

The implementation of this project has taken place under extraordinary and demanding circumstances. Shortly after its launch, the global COVID-19 pandemic reshaped international collaboration, and in late 2022, the full-scale military aggression against Ukraine further intensified these challenges.

Analysing the journey we have taken with the project "Support to Ukraine for Developing a Modern Public Health System", I can confidently state its significant and positive contribution to strengthening **Ukraine's blood and blood components donation system**, especially during a period of substantial transformation. The support in developing key bylaws, Cabinet of Ministers' decisions, and Ministry of Health orders has not only facilitated the implementation of the Law of Ukraine on blood donation but has also aligned the national blood system more closely with European standards. After all, a well-defined and robust regulatory framework is essential for ensuring the safety and effective management of blood supplies.

We witness the results of our synergistic cooperation every day, as we have successfully implemented **capacity-building activities, including the establishment of a national blood quality management and communications system** at the Ukrainian Centre for Transplant Coordination. The project has played a crucial role in fostering the development of a well-functioning quality system within blood system entities.

Our collaboration has also created new opportunities for effective **interaction** among all stakeholders in the blood system, including **donors, recipients, medical institutions, and healthcare authorities**. With the support of the project, a unified national information system is being developed to track donor visits, recipients, donations, blood stock levels, and demand for blood components. This system will enhance transparency and efficiency across all processes.

The IT team has been actively working on key technological solutions, including **eKrov, an internal information and communication system** for coordinating the work of centres and the UTCC.

Effective cooperation and interaction among all stakeholders within this project were key to its successful implementation. The project provided tangible support in establishing a **blood stock management system in Ukraine**. Notably, with the involvement of project experts, protocols were developed for blood collection and the use of plasma from COVID-19 patients, enhancing patient care and blood transfusion services. **Special attention was also given to training blood collection staff**, equipping them with best practices, the latest approaches, and the ability to adapt to various challenges – from the COVID-19 pandemic to the realities of a full-scale invasion.

The joint efforts of government authorities, healthcare institutions, international partners, and NGOs have enabled the creation of a **reliable and stable blood system in Ukraine**. One of the most significant achievements has been the introduction of **modern tools for monitoring key performance indicators (KPIs)**, allowing for quick responses to changes and process optimisation. Furthermore, the organisation has begun **utilising the CAPA (Corrective and Preventive Actions)** methodology, which helps systematically identify, analyse, and eliminate inconsistencies, ensuring continuous improvement and risk prevention in the future.

All these changes are aimed at making Ukraine's blood system more efficient, safer and citizen-oriented.

I am convinced that one of the main tasks in providing any country with donated blood is proper communication. After all, increased attention to the promotion of voluntary non-remunerated blood donation has already borne fruit in other countries. Thanks to the project, we have managed to implement a number of important initiatives in this regard. The **communication campaign aimed at promoting voluntary non-remunerated blood donation in Ukraine** has achieved significant results due to effective audience engagement. The total number of potential donors reached during the project implementation **was more than 2 million people**.

We implemented several waves of the information campaign. The first wave promoted awareness of the importance of donation and active involvement of people and had the slogan **"Your blood can fight, become a donor"**. It was followed by the second wave, which is still relevant today: **"War has no holidays! Your blood can fight, become a donor"**. The next stage was a wave that emphasised the importance of attracting new donors through personal recommendations: **"Give blood and invite a friend"** and the last one **"Blood donation is priceless"**, which emphasises the importance of voluntary non-remunerated blood donation as an act of humanity and life-saving.

An integrated approach to communication, motivation and engagement of all population groups in donation is the basis for the sustainable development of the donation system.

GFA Consulting Group GmbH will remain engaged in assisting health sector reform processes in Ukraine for the coming years and is strongly hoping for the re-establishment of peace in Ukraine.



Eva Schildbach

Department Director, Health, GFA Consulting Group GmbH

Despite these obstacles, THL has remained **committed to its mission**, adapting swiftly to remote collaboration in place of on-site visits and direct engagement with Ukrainian colleagues.

Despite these demanding external circumstances, the project has demonstrated **resilience, transparency, and adaptability**. **THL's contributions** have exemplified the **strength of international partnerships** in advancing public health objectives, even in the face of adversity.



Juha Rumpunen

Development Manager, THL home office project coordinator, Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL)

Additionally, the project assisted in developing a set of registers and functional solutions to integrate transfusion data into eHealth and update medical information systems in healthcare facilities.

The project has not only contributed to the development of an information and communication system for blood donation but has also initiated **technological innovations within the electronic healthcare system**.

Despite the additional challenges posed by the full-scale invasion, Ukraine's blood system continues to **function effectively**, ensuring the **availability of blood and blood components** for all those in need.



Dmytro Koval

Director General at Specialised state institution "Ukrainian Centre for Transplant Coordination" (UTCC)

They create a solid foundation for further integration of international best practices and sustainable development of the sector. Overall, the project was an **important step towards creating a sustainable blood and blood component donation system in Ukraine** that meets international standards, ensuring a continuous supply of blood and blood components for patients in need of these vital resources.



Oleksandr Serhienko

Deputy Director at Specialised state institution "Ukrainian Centre for Transplant Coordination" (UTCC)

This is also enshrined in the strategy for the development of voluntary non-remunerated donation of blood and blood components until 2028, which was approved in March 2024. Through information campaigns, among other things, we create a **solid foundation for the development of a voluntary non-remunerated blood donation system in Ukraine**, increasing responsibility and awareness among the population.



Liudmyla Hordon

Deputy Director at Specialised state institution "Ukrainian Centre for Transplant Coordination" (UTCC)

Supporting the preparation of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine for the Bilateral Screening Meeting on Consumer and Health Protection

Part of the negotiation of Ukraine's membership of the European Union (EU), is the **Bilateral Screening Meeting** on the Acquis related to Chapter 28 covering consumer and health protection, that took place in Brussels on 10-12 February 2025. Accession in the public health sector started even before the EU announced the membership negotiations with Ukraine on 21 June 2024 and the EU project "Support to Ukraine for Developing a Modern Public Health System", has supported this process since 2019.

To further support the preparedness of the Ministry of Health for the screening meeting, the Project actively participated in the **Mock-Sessions**¹ organised by Association4U "Support for the Implementation of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement Phase II", led by Mr. Cezar Herma.



During the first Session, that took place on **19 and 20 December 2024**, the experts played the role of advising about the content of the 21 presentations², layout, timing and presentation modality. With the outset in the **Ukraine 2024 EU Enlargement Report**, the draft answers on the EU Questionnaire and a good understanding of EU policy related to public health, more than 27 pages of suggestions for improvement of the slides were provided by the experts. The Project's contribution was mostly devoted to Patients' **rights in cross-border healthcare, EU Health Programme, Health Technology Assessment and safety and quality of blood**.

Participants simulated a bilateral meeting between Ukraine and the European Commission, discussing key technical and regulatory aspects related to the Association Agreement. It should be mentioned that the Project also has supported the preparation for the screening of the elements related to **public health within Chapter 1 and Chapter 29**.

¹ Definition of mock session: 1) training simulation or 2. practice meeting or event

² Following the headings in Chapter 28

³ As of December 2024, the Russian Federation has damaged 1,938 medical facilities and completely destroyed 297 health structures

The second Session was organised on **9th and 10th of January 2025** where the presentations were shown again, but this time updated with inclusion of the recommendations from session I. During Session II the experts simulated to be from DG SANTE asking the questions that most likely would be important for the EU Commission. More than 26 pages of questions were prepared and the same number of pages of suggestions for improvements of the slides were provided by the experts.



The main actors of Ukraine public health sector went to Brussels not only with 21 high quality presentations but with the message that despite the full-scale invasion³, **more than 88% of the tasks** under the Ukraine-EU Agreement in the field of **public health are completed**, that the Ukraine health system remains stable and that the implementation of the Healthcare Strategy of Ukraine until 2030 continues, as stated by Mrs. Maryna Slobodnichenko, Deputy Minister of Health of Ukraine for European Integration, in her introduction remarks.

These sessions prepared participants for the official screening of Ukraine's legislative compliance with EU standards which will shape **Ukraine's progress toward EU healthcare integration**.

Poul Thim

Project Senior International
Non-Key Legal Expert

Strengthening Ukraine's Healthcare System for a Resilient Future

Supported by the EU project "Support to Ukraine for Developing a Modern Public Health System", representatives of the Ministry of Health participated in the **36th Session of the OECD Health Committee, held on December 2-3, 2024**.

Among the key topics discussed during the meeting were reports from the Chairs of the Health Statistics Working Group and the HealthCare Quality and Outcomes Working Group, preliminary findings from the PaRIS survey on people with chronic conditions (with a full report expected in February 2025), and key results from the rapid report on outpatient healthcare financing.



During a **dialogue with Ukraine**, the Committee saw Ukraine's presentation on maintaining **health system resilience in the face of crises**. OECD member countries were invited to participate in the discussion on this topic to guide their national policy.



The **Ukrainian delegation emphasized that the state's priorities in healthcare remain unchanged**:

- 1. Accessibility of Services**
 - renewing patient care pathways, developing hospital networks, introducing new united territorial community hospital formats, enhancing mobility for primary healthcare, telemedicine, and more.
- 2. Quality of Services**
 - updating standards, improving error-checking approaches for providers, fostering international medical partnerships, monitoring quality, identifying and addressing systemic gaps, and preparing for the establishment of a single transparent regulatory body for medical products.
- 3. Free Access to Services**
 - increasing primary healthcare funding, shifting the focus to the most vulnerable populations, supporting a "single medical space".

Despite three years of full-scale aggression, Ukraine continues its European integration in healthcare transformation under the Acquis, progressing in 20 out of 32 negotiation chapters. Within the core Chapter 28, "Consumer and Health Protection," **80% of the health-related Acquis has already been implemented**.

The OECD event served as a central international platform in healthcare and a crucial opportunity to draw the global community's attention to the challenges facing Ukraine's healthcare system amid Russia's aggressive full-scale invasion. It also facilitated international technical, humanitarian, and financial assistance and the **sustainable development of international medical partnership**.

Liliia Horbatiuk

Project Junior Non-Key
Legal Expert

Strengthening Quality Management Systems in Blood Transfusion System

The **Quality Manager Training** hosted by Portuguese Institute of Blood and Transplantation (IPST) was held from March 3 to March 7, 2025, in Porto. This comprehensive training provided participants with the knowledge and practical tools needed to implement, assess, and improve quality standards in compliance with international best practices.



During the visit, attendees explored IPST document structures, gaining a deeper understanding of how effective document management contributes to operational efficiency and regulatory compliance. The visit also facilitated discussions on challenges and best practices, allowing participants to exchange ideas and strategies for improving quality management in their own organizations.



Core Training Components

The training covered a structured curriculum that addressed key aspects of quality management:

- Quality Management Systems**
 - Principles, standards, and organizational frameworks.
- Document Management and Records Control**
 - Best practices for ensuring compliance and efficiency.
- Risk Management and Audits**
 - Techniques for identifying, mitigating, and assessing risks.
- Continuous Improvement**
 - Utilising quality indicators and data-driven decision-making.

In addition to theoretical sessions, the program included **practical case studies** focused on risk assessments, management review reports, and handling non-conformities.

These interactive exercises reinforced participants' ability to **apply learned concepts** in real-world scenarios, directly contributing to strengthening Ukraine's blood transfusion sector.

Project Closure Event

As the project nears its conclusion, we are pleased to announce the Project Closure Event, which will take place on April 7, 2025, in Kyiv at Hotel Hilton. This event will serve as a platform to reflect on the **project's achievements**, discuss its **lasting impact** on Ukraine's public health and blood safety systems, and explore **the way forward**.

The agenda includes engaging panel discussions, expert insights, and video presentations featuring key stakeholders such as representatives from the Ministry of Health, UTCC, international partners, and public health professionals. Attendees will have the opportunity to participate in discussions on the future of public health reform in Ukraine, as well as explore options for continued collaboration.

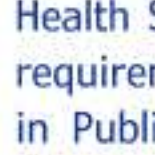
We look forward to celebrating our **collective achievements** and fostering **meaningful discussions** on sustaining progress beyond the project's closure.

THANK YOU!

We extend our **heartfelt gratitude** to all stakeholders, partners, and health professionals who contributed to this **transformative journey**. Your dedication has laid the foundation for a **healthier, more resilient Ukraine**.

This publication was produced with the financial support of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine. 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.

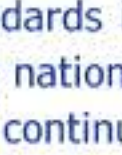
The overall project's objective is to support the modernisation and development of a sustainable Public Health System that is able to ensure disease prevention and control standards in line with EU legislation, requirements, and practices. The project shall contribute to strengthening national leadership 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.



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