

“Supporting Ukraine, neighbouring EU MS, and Moldova: Information-sharing webinar on how civil society and health professionals can mobilise to support medical and public health needs of Ukrainian and displaced persons”

Friday 4 March 2022, 14:30 – 16:30 CET, Brussels time

Over 350 people registered for the webinar, including representatives from Member States, patient organisations, health professionals, NGOs and industry.

“I am impressed by your work and admire your engagement,” said Director General of Health and Food Safety Sandra Gallina, opening the webinar. “What we need now is to federate our efforts. . It’s important that we try to lay the foundation to coordinate in a way that is most useful for the recipients.”

After giving an overview of what the Commission is doing in collaboration with Member States, other EU agencies and institutions and international organisations to provide medical assistance in this crisis, she gave the floor to Acting Deputy Director General John F. Ryan, who discussed urgent needs and the vital role of health stakeholders in providing support.

Isabel de la Mata then took over to moderate the nearly two-hour discussion, first providing some information about the coordination mechanism provided through DG ECHO and the ERCC for the transfer of patients. This is done closely with the national competent authorities, she explained. Medicines and medical devices are also included in the transfers via the EU civil protection mechanism, and the requests received so far could be shared with any interested stakeholders.

Participants overwhelmingly voiced their support for pooling together efforts and sharing knowledge in order to avoid duplicating efforts, to prioritize needs and to be able to provide assistance and medical supplies as quickly as possible. Many stakeholders also had the opportunity to share their experiences and state their needs, either by taking the microphone or leaving comments by chat.

More in detail:

Mike Morrissey (European Cancer Organisation - ECO)

Cooperation with medical professions, pharmacists and patients and contacts with Ukraine and neighboring counties to identify and cover needs of cancer patients. Translation-interpretation is a top priority as patients arriving to neighboring counties are not always able to communicate. Time to act inclusively and with all relevant actors as a community of support (contact Mike.Morrissey@europeancancer.org). Welcomed DG SANTE’s initiative for organizing this webinar.

Maurizio Cecconi (European Society of Intensive Care Medicine - ESICM)

ESICM have valuable experience with the COVID_19 crisis and they have received a lot of messages from people who want to help. Establishing a platform would be important to organise and structure the cooperation by creating “on call networks”.

Iaria Passarani (Pharmaceutical Group of European Union)

As pharmacists are not allowed to export medicines, they have activated their members to donate products through the Red Cross, and are also collecting funds.. They advise all their members to go through the national channels and to establish a list of medicines needed for Ukraine and maintain close contact with colleges on site in Ukraine to try to get names of the medicines needed and find their EU equivalents.

Inma Vazquez MSF - Médecins Sans Frontières

MSF has already deployed local teams in Ukraine. In addition to the need to coordinate, it is crucial to prioritize needs and concentrate on the essential (what is to be shipped first).

Establishing several safe corridors through which to send goods is very important- it will be difficult to manage otherwise. They see three main priority axes: mental health, women's and children's health care and Covid-19 high prevalence. Romania and Moldova will also need support, as the situation of their health systems is quite critical.

Sarada Das (Standing Committee of European Doctors- CPME)

Poland has opened an account to receive financial contributions from medical associations. CPME is grateful to be in touch with the Commission and happy to help.

Elisabeth Adams (European Federation of Nurses Associations – EFN)

EFN is ready to collaborate and support. They are collaborating with the International Council of Nurses, globalising several million nurses from which 3 million are in Europe. 120 000 nurses in Ukraine (most of them are female) cannot cross the border and must stay in their country to respond to the needs in war. These key healthworkers also have emotional needs and are delivering care under extremely insecure conditions (so far 24 attacks on health facilities in Ukraine). A humanitarian front has been established by The International Council of Nurses (#nurses for peace) and align their efforts with all the other health stakeholders. It is very important to share a common knowledge/understanding, and for this reason EFN is in favour of the creation of a platform to share information.

Paul Garassus (Union Européenne des Hôpitaux Privés)

They are in close contact with Polish colleagues and report that hospitals in Poland and Romania are open to accept all patients. They suggest that the EU Commission builds a network for chronic and severe conditions. They have sent medical material as a response to the identified needs and urge the EU for a solution at diplomacy level for the creation of humanitarian corridors to dispatch this material to citizens in Ukraine. They are looking at how they can cooperate with MSF.

Ruben Diaz (European Children's Hospital Organisation)

The organisations represents 13 hospitals in 13 EU Member States including Poland.

They are concerned about children from Ukraine with complex disorders and cancer, who will probably arrive and remain in Poland. It would be good to coordinate efforts for their transfer/transport and to establish a network to distribute these patients. They would like to cooperate with other associations working in the area and would appreciate having a triage hub and a network for sharing information.

Adrian Van der Hoven (Medicines for Europe)

They are working with colleagues in Ukraine where medicine production is shut down. Doctors still have some supplies, but not for long, and the major challenge is the establishment of a humanitarian corridor. There is a warehouse problem. Transferring medicines from the western part of Ukraine to the eastern part is a short-term solution, at least for some emergency medicines. EU should stand up and facilitate the dialogue.

Jesus Rueda Rodriguez (MedTech Europe)

Material is also requested by hospitals in Ukraine. Same problem with logistics on how to get them through Ukraine's borders. Need for a clear housing mechanism and to understand what is exactly needed through an improved information mechanism not only for refugees but also within Ukraine.

Katie Rizvi (Youth council of Europe)

It took them many days to create a network for logistic support. They see the need for a structured cooperation through the establishment of a task force at European level to provide the best care in oncology. They are aware of the recent Directive that Ukrainian refugees could have access to healthcare under the same conditions as EU nationals, however they highlighted that the health systems in some countries are already crumbling under the weight of serving their own citizens.

Andrew Powrie-Smith (European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations)

There are millions of medicines donated, however the main priority is to have open humanitarian corridors, avoid national stockpiling and to remain as flexible as possible to ensure that refugees have access to medicines they need. Forecasting of needs is also important to increase capacity to meet the needs of the refugees' community.

Pascal Garel (HOPE – European Hospital and Healthcare Federation)

They have contacted their members and they welcome this initiative of cooperation-coordination at EU-level. It is important that everyone has the same information. The message from Poland is that they already have many patients. And refugees are also arriving in other EU countries such as Latvia, Germany, France etc. Moldova will certainly need help.

Raymond Vanholder (European Kidney Health Alliance)

Water and energy are important resources for the dialysis treatment of kidney patients and they are already in short supply in cities that have been destroyed or are under siege. A lot of things are happening under the radar. Ukrainian patients, inside or outside Ukraine, with acute kidney injuries need dialysis. They suggest that a triage at the border would be important and they are distributing guidelines (for the moment in the Russian language – need to translate them in Ukrainian). Another issue is that patients who have had kidney transplants or awaiting transplants need care..

Diderik Aarendonk (European Forum of Primary Care)

They represent a strong group with contacts also on the Russian side. They say that it might have an influence to send trustworthy messages about what is happening and please to stop the

violence through colleagues working with the Russian population. They are ready to join coordinated efforts for medical support.

Adriana Boata (Centre for Innovation in Medicine)

They believe that science and innovation must continue to improve our lives in good and bad times, in times of war or peace. Scientists and innovators should not stop their work because the war has begun, and they will not. So, they decided to support European integration of the students and young health professionals from Ukraine. Students, young medical doctors, pharmacists and researchers affected by the war in Ukraine can apply for an intern position at the Centre for Innovation in Medicine. The Centre offers up to 3 positions in the EU Health Policy Department and up to 3 positions in Health Communication Department:

<https://www.linkedin.com/jobs/view/2946782130/>

Francesca Centola (Mental Health Europe - MHE)

The war in Ukraine can have devastating long-term consequences on the mental health of children and young people. UNICEF has stated that “*every child caught up in the conflict in eastern Ukraine is now thought to be in need of psychosocial support*”. Mental Health Europe calls for immediate psycho-social support and access to good quality mental health services. The MHE Bulgarian member- Skin- started a free online mental health support to people in Ukraine and Ukrainian citizens seeking asylum in Bulgaria. See here:

<https://www.facebook.com/SkinIFeelGood/posts/4925403984211997>

They have already had a couple of intervention with people in bomb shelters in Kiev. They are seeking for volunteers, particularly English- or Ukrainian-speaking psychologists with crisis intervention experience. Also, any trainings on how to speak to people whose lives are directly at risk as we speak would be appreciated. Please contact Irina Atanasova: <https://koja-bg.org/contact/> ; irina@koja-bg.org

Henrique Lopes (Association of Public Health Schools - ASPHER)

The ongoing crisis is a huge public health risk that overlaps with a pandemic that has not ended: problems such as correct nutrition for Ukraine and neighboring countries as well as mental health are important threats in this moment. Also, only two years after the start of the pandemic, the risk for Covid-19 to spread due to the refugee situation (low vaccine rates, disinformation and vaccine skepticism, crowded conditions, etc.) should be seriously considered: health information should be provided and there should be a reinforcement of vaccination of populations that have the lowest covid vaccination rates in Europe. This needs an appropriate response. ASPHER has set up a Task Force and is open to partnerships involved in or related to Public Health.

https://www.aspher.org/download/1041/aspher_statement_on_the_war_against_ukraine.pdf

Elisabeth Dupont (International Diabetes Association - IDF)

IDF Europe is an umbrella group of 70 diabetes associations. Since the start of the crisis, IDF Transnational Member Direct Relief has mobilised its resources to support medical needs in the country as they became known. This included a large shipment of diabetes supplies as insulin and other cold chain medications are expected to be in short supply. IDF will continue to monitor the situation and collaborate with Direct Relief to meet medical needs as the crisis unfolds.

IDF Europe is working with all its members to support Ukrainian refugees living with diabetes across Europe. At this point, they are gathering information from Poland, Moldova, Romania, Hungary and Slovakia, that will provide information to Ukrainian people living with diabetes who would arrive in one of these countries on how/where they would be able to access their diabetes treatment, etc.

IDF Europe also facilitate support from IDF Europe Member Associations across Europe wishing to help other national diabetes associations in Ukraine's neighbouring countries, provide advice, medicines, supplies, to Ukrainian refugees etc. Information for health care professionals outside Ukraine will also be provided about the type of insulins available in Ukraine and how these could be switched to insulins available in the EU.

The situation in Moldova is critical – the country had no stock of insulin before the conflict. With the refugees coming to Moldova, the situation regarding the insulin will only grow worse. A solution should be found through the EU.

Agnes Simon (European Midwives Association)

There will be gender violence during this conflict. Midwives are professionals throughout Europe trained to care for women victims of gender violence- basic training could be provided even on line to train professionals close to the combat zones. The European Midwives Association could help disseminate information about maternity and newborn care to their associations and help coordinate.

Sibilia Quillici (Vaccines Europe)

They are interested in the ECDC assessment for communicable diseases (data from MS). They have stressed the importance of coordination and communication, as lots of the refugees are vaccine hesitant and specific, targeted information will be needed to reach and convince these people.

John F. Ryan said that the Commission is in close contact with the Health Security Committee for risk analysis and management. Today's webinar, he reminded participants, was focused on what civil society and health professionals can contribute from their side.

Dragoslaw Domanovic (European Blood Alliance)

They are ready to help and coordinate but have problems to get info about blood needs in Ukraine. They have sent an enquiry about the situation through German colleagues and are waiting for the reply. Providing blood supply where it is needed should be possible, but everyone needs to be clear about how to do it (cold storage, etc.) Thus, there is a need for specifications about types of technologies etc.

Anton Basenko (European Aids treatment group)

A Ukrainian HIV patient expressed his thanks and offered help for sharing info about specific needs and helping refugees know where to access care..

Jantine Jacobi (Unaids)

Stressed the importance of respecting human rights for all refugees, including communities of LGBTI people

Conclusions :

- There is strong engagement of civil society, industry and health professionals to help Ukraine with humanitarian medical support.
- There is general interest in having a Platform for sharing knowledge and coordinating efforts. DG SANTE offered the Health Policy Platform, of which the majority of the participants were already members , and said it would create a designated Stakeholders Network.
- Two hours time was not enough to allow everyone to speak, therefore all contributions (the written comments in the chat) are annexed to the notes of the meeting and will be shared through the Platform
- This was the kick-off meeting of a process to mobilise industry, civil society and health professionals and help them to coordinate efforts and head towards the same direction (with the main challenge being the organisational aspects of the logistical support).

The chair thanked the participants for their solidarity.

ANNEX: Written contributions in the Chat



CHAT_Webinar
supporting Ukraine-n