

EU financial support to the Serbian Health Sector

HEALTH SECTOR PROJECTS:

Ongoing:

- *Western Balkans support to vaccination against COVID 19 (Direct Management) – ‘EU4Health: Contribution to the availability and access to vaccines against COVID-19 in the Republic of Serbia’ grant to the Ministry of Health (27.324 million EUR), duration 18 month until March 2023.*
- *IPA 2018 EU Integration facility (Indirect Management) - **Support in strengthening of the capacities of relevant institutions within the substances of human origins system (SoHO)** – a 1.5 million EUR twinning project with the National Blood Centre of Lithuania. The relevant procurement of equipment was completed in the summer of 2022, for an amount of 2.45 million EUR – 1.5 million EU contribution). Deliveries of equipment are ongoing.*

Planned:

- *IPA 2020 EU Integration facility (Indirect Management) - **Building institutional and human capacities for communicable disease surveillance and response system** is currently tendered (MEUR 1 for a twinning and MEUR 2.55 million EU contribution for total relevant equipment for surveillance to increase quality of epidemiological surveillance and readiness for responding to emergencies).*
- *IPA 2021 (Direct Management) - MEUR 12 Contribution Agreement titled ‘**EU for enabling a more responsive healthcare system**’ will be signed in December 2022 for implementation by the UNDP/WHO. The programme intends to achieve the following:*
 - *develop procedures for healthcare system response to emergencies at national and local level;*
 - *develop quality standards for epidemiology, microbiology, virology, molecular biology*
 - *update the disaster risk register for public health*
 - *develop the e-health system*
 - *provide public health emergency management training for health system employees*
 - *provide training of sanitary inspectors on detection of public health threats, risk assessment and response in public health emergencies*
 - *provide equipment for primary and secondary healthcare centres/facilities for detection of reaction and infective clinics/departments for detection of reaction and response in emergencies*
 - *establish of biosafety level 2 and 3 laboratories*
 - *train professionals for psycho-social support for groups affected by public health crisis and emergency*
 - *raise awareness through tailor-made events and campaigns for the general public on how to react in a health emergency.*

EU’S COVID-19 ASSISTANCE:

At the request of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Serbia, the European Union financed the hiring of 200 health workers for 15 months to cope with an increase of Covid 19 cases in Serbia. The health personnel comprises of medical doctors, medical technicians and administrative staff to support Institutes of Public Health, Primary Health Care Centre Covid Clinics and key Serbian laboratories, deployed assisting the existing health care staff until March 2022.

With regard to Covid-19, the EU quickly made available 93 million Euros in March 2020: 15 million Euros were allocated for immediate response, while 78 Million euros are allocated to medium term economic recovery.

At the moment, the status of Covid-19 related assistance delivered to Serbia is the following:

1. Immediate medical needs:
 - a. 7,186,598 EUR for PPE and transport costs for equipment (paid in full)
 - b. **14,155,800 EUR for various medical equipment and vehicles, as well as the costs of employment of 200 medical staff in 25 health institutions during 12 months (paid in full)**
 - c. **Grant to the Ministry of Health to pay for EMA approved vaccines: 27,324,600 EUR (paid in full)**
 - d. EUCPM assistance: 7,060,567 EUR (paid in full)
 - e. EUSF – reimbursement of costs Serbia had in fighting Covid: 11,968,276 EUR (allocated)
2. Socio-economic needs:
 - a. 10,362,000 EUR (paid in full)

The emergency response was initiated in March 2020 with an immediate initiative of the EU Delegation to reprogram a portion of the funding under the EU PRO Programme and securing additional funding from the EU SHAI to enable provision of the most urgent support to Serbia. **The initial support in medical equipment** included 25 devices for ventilation, anaesthesia and monitoring, 50 devices for mechanical ventilation, 50 intensive care monitors, 100 stationary oxygen concentrators, 300 thermometers, 800,000 protective masks, two Real-Time PCR laboratory instruments with reagents for 25,000 tests.

The support also included **donation of 20 ambulance vehicles** worth 800,000 Euros. The vehicles equipped with oxygen kits, mobile respirators, defibrillators, stretchers, cardiac chairs, and other devices contributing to medical services being even more prepared to take care of emergencies, were handed over to 20 health centres and hospitals in the country.¹ **Another 12 ambulances and 2 specialised decontamination vehicles, as well as 75 specialised protective suits** were delivered in November 2020 via a disaster risk resilience project programmed in IPA 2018.

Further responding to the needs, as the anti-COVID-19 vaccine became available, with the EU funding using existing contracts implemented by UNOPS, **procurement processes were conducted for medical equipment** needed for securing the cold chain for vaccination that included 33 refrigerators, 32 freezers and 12 deep freezers that were delivered to medical centres throughout Serbia in April and March 2021. In September 2021 the EU delivered 26 specialised vehicles (value: 520,195 EUR) for the transportation of vaccines and medical teams for vaccination. The vehicles are equipped with a mobile oxygen set, portable cooler (-24C to +40C) enabling vaccine transportation, cupboard, a dispenser for hand disinfection, and medical waste bin. These specialized vehicles enable distribution of vaccines to remote health stations and increase outreach in vaccination. Twenty-five (25) vehicles are designed for two medical teams (four persons), while one is additionally equipped with a patient stretcher can accommodate four medical teams (eight persons). These vehicles were donated to Institutes for Public Health all around Serbia (24 institutes).

¹Health Centres in Gornji Milanovac, Kraljevo, Kruševac, Leskovac, Golubac, Knjaževac, Pirot, Krupanj, Žagubica, Bujanovac, Medveđa and Jagodina, as well as general hospitals in Čuprija, Bor, Novi Pazar, Smederevska Palanka, Loznica, and City Institute for Emergency Medical Aid, the Special Hospital "St. Sava" and the Clinical Hospital Center Bežanijska Kosa.

Also, 140 medical triage containers to prevent virus from spreading in hospitals were delivered to 52 municipalities throughout Serbia².

The EU also supported the **engagement of 200 medical and non-medical staff within 25 health institutions for 15 months** (initial six months plus three 3-month extensions, the second and third one as part of the EUPro+ contract). From September 2020 to 30 November 2021, medical and non-medical staff in 25 institutions provided millions COVID19-related healthcare interventions/services.

Furthermore, **5,600 packages with basic food and hygiene products** (out of which 2,000 delivered in 2020 and an additional 3,600 delivered in February 2021) were distributed to the most vulnerable, including Roma families and people experiencing homelessness throughout the country.

The EU shares its COVID-19 related guidance and assessments with Serbia via the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). EU invited Western Balkan partners to join its **Joint Procurement Agreement** to procure medical countermeasures. Serbia signed the agreement on 21 April 2020 and nominated representatives for the Steering Committee. So far, Serbia needed to be reminded to express its needs for Covid related procurements (remdesivir, antigen tests). Serbia is an observing member of the **EU Health Committee** since 2017. The European Commission offered Serbia access to the **Early Warning and Response System** for all information related to the COVID-19 outbreak and Serbia nominated its representatives to access the system. The **EU's Joint Research Centre** delivered positive control material for COVID-19 tests to Serbian national reference laboratories so they can control their COVID tests.

The EU encouraged Serbia and all the partners in the EU Neighbourhood to express an interest to join the **COVAX Facility** and its Advance Market Commitment to secure access to vaccines procured by the Facility at a negotiated price. On 18 September, Serbia signed the agreement with the COVAX facility about purchase methods and number of needed doses, as a self-paying country. 292,800 Astra Zeneca and 306,000 Sinopharm vaccines were delivered to Serbia via this mechanism to date.

Following its request, the Republic of Serbia has received 12 million Euros from the **European Union Solidarity Fund** to, in great part, cover costs of measures taken to contain the disease from the national budget.

Last but not least, on 12 October, the national authorities formally submitted their application to enter the Third Country EU Digital COVID certificate Equivalence Decision procedure to the **EU Digital Covid Certificate** Secretariat so as to allow the inclusion of Serbia in the list of non-EU countries applying the EU's digital certificate. This application was approved by the EU and is now in function since 16/11/2021 and Serbia is now part of the EU DGC system.

EU SUPPORT TO THE HEALTH SECTOR SINCE 2001:

Over the past two decades, the EU has **equipped hospitals, laboratories, institutes of public health and blood transfusion centres** and provided **252 emergency medical vehicles** for health centres around Serbia, of which 122 have been delivered with ventilators.

To date, the EU supported Serbia's healthcare network through the **European Investment Bank**:

1) funds for **50 million euros were used for the reconstruction and construction of 20 large hospitals across Serbia**, including the Torlak Institute;

2) a second EIB loan finances the reconstruction of four **University Clinical Centres in Nis, Belgrade, Novi Sad and Kragujevac** are further being supported by **another 250 million euros**. The EU granted over 6.5 MEUR in the training, a capacity building and business plan development for a functioning PIU for this loan. From the outset (signed in 2007) the loan is taking a lot of time in implementation, with

²Aleksinac (1), Arandjelovac (1), Belgrade including City Municipalities (36), Bojnik (1), Bor (1), Bujanovac (1), Čačak (4), Čuprija (3), Gornji Milanovac (1), Indija (2), Jagodina (1), Kikinda (3), Kladovo (1), Knjaževac (1), Kragujevac (7), Kraljevo (2), Kruševac (3), Lebane (1), Leskovac (3), Loznica (1), Majdanpek (1), Medveđa (1), Negotin (1), Niš (6), Nova Varoš (1), Novi Pazar (3), Novi Sad (7), Pančevo (6), Paraćin (1), Petrovac (1), Pirot (3), Požarevac (3), Priboj (1), Prijepolje (1), Prokuplje (1), Šabac (2), Senta (1), Smederevo (1), Smederevska Palanka (1), Sombor (3), Sremska Mitrovica (2), Stara Pazova (1), Subotica (2), Surdulica (1), Užice (3), Valjevo (2), Vlasotince (1), Vranje (2), Vrbas (1), Vršac (1), Zaječar (2), Zrenjanin (3)

only the construction of a new building and the renovation and expansion of the Nis Clinical Centre completed in 2019. That includes work on existing facilities, new blocks, courtyards and parking spaces. A total of 45,000m² were reconstructed, and this significant regional health centre received 600 hospital beds, of which 38 were for intensive care and 42 for semi-intensive care. The EIB financed the construction of the Nis CC with 34 million euros, while the budget of the Republic of Serbia allocated 16 million euros for the procurement of equipment. Works on the Clinical Centre in Novi Sad have started and for the one in Belgrade Serbia also allocated additional 113 million EUR to complete the project, while the one in Kragujevac is developing at a slower pace.

The EU made possible the use of new modern surgical operating rooms, emergency centres, a large number of hospital beds, new ambulances and hospital kitchen and hygiene equipment purchased for centres in Kikinda, Pancevo, Sombor, Smederevo, Sremska Mitrovica, Zajecar, Cacak, Krusevac, Pirost and Belgrade.

In the past, the EU support to the health sector has been extensive, higher than other non- EU countries. Since then, assistance is provided only for specific acquis issues from the EU integration facility – twinnings on communicable diseases and tobacco control.

IPA 2018 provides assistance for **Substances of Human Origin** - 3 MEUR, and another 3.55 MEUR is planned from IPA 2020 for **Communicable Diseases**, both prominent in Chapter 28 and important for the opening of the Chapter. The Ministry and the CFCU have launched the relevant procurement and twinning and are expected to contract the programmed assistance within the contracting deadline for IPA 2018, i.e., as soon as possible.

PREVIOUS EU ASSISTANCE TO THE HEALTH SECTOR (2000 – 2015)

PHARMACEUTICAL SECTOR WITH DRUG CONTROL (≈ M€ 64)

(2000 – M€ 20) Supply of essential medicines and medical supplies to public pharmacies and health institutions in Serbia. This made available essential drugs to large number of patients, at a crucial moment, while providing much needed support to the pharmaceutical industry.

(2001 – M€ 23.7) Support to the Serbian Pharmaceutical Sector. Supply of essential drugs, reagents and medical consumables (13.5M€) and medical equipment (7.5M€), and provision of training and technical assistance.

(2001 – M€ 2.8) Support to the regulatory framework of the pharmaceutical sector. Provision of technical assistance to help establish a Medical Products Agency, in line with current EU practices, to assume overall responsibility for the regulation of the pharmaceutical sector. **Rationalization of the local Pharmaceutical Industry.** Provision of technical assistance to the local pharmaceutical industry to improve its technical performance and raise the general level of compliance with EU standards of GMP. **Technical Assistance for the rationalization of drug prescribing and utilization in Serbia, including the development of diagnostic, treatment and referral protocols and the development of patient education programmes.**

(2002 – M€ 5.5) Reorganisation of Blood Transfusion Services. Reforming and upgrading the existing blood transfusion system through the provision of TA and equipment.

(2003 – M€ 6.2) Improving Medicine Management Practices in Serbia. Improvement of medicine utilization in hospitals, computerization of hospital pharmacies and health institutions, support to the Medicine Agency and continuous development of guidelines.

(2005 – M€ 1.3) Twinning to the Serbian Medical Products Agency. Provision of expert support to ALIMIS to provide services to health professionals, patients, pharmacists, wholesalers and the pharmaceutical industry.

(2011/14 – M€ 4) Implementation of the Strategy for fight against drugs - supply reduction component – IPA 2010. The supply of laboratory equipment for narcotic drug detection and a twinning project aimed at upgrading the system of prevention of drug abuse and fighting production, trafficking and distribution of drugs in Serbia in accordance with EU standards. Sophisticated equipment was procured for the detection of drugs and drug precursors in line with a national drugs strategy

HEALTH SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT (≈ M€ 32)

(2002 – M€ 0.2) Serbian Burden of Disease. Establishing the national burden of disease and producing internationally comparable health indicators.

(2002/3 – M€ 2.82) Assessment of the Institute of Public Health Network in Serbia. An in-depth analysis of the status of the public health institution network, providing written recommendations for reorganization. **Support to the public Health Development.** Development of public health policies, strategies, human resources and practices, provision of training to IPH staff and establishment of a School of Public Health.

(2003/4 – M€ 3.6) Development of Health Information System (HIS) for Basic Health and Pharmaceutical Services. Establishing quality HIS at all levels of care including data collection, transmission, analysis, use and dissemination. **Evaluation of existing Primary Health Care Software. Functional Analysis of Health Information System.** Analysis of current ICT resources and recommendations of functions to be integrated in the future HIS.

(2003/5 – M€ 3.4) Assessment of Capacity Building of the Health Insurance Fund (HIF). The project will assist in improving HIF governance, external accountability, internal systems of financial control and management, as well as in developing contracting capacity with health care providers at primary and secondary health care level.

(2005/6 – M€ 4.8) Capacity Building for Health Management Training. The Project will aims to assist in modernizing and improving the Serbian health system through Health Management training and capacity development. It shall also provide for distance learning equipment and the rehabilitation of space for a School of Health management.

(2005/6 – M€ 4.6) Support for the implementation of capitation in primary health care. The project supports the MoH/HIF in implementing capitation payment at primary health care level with the aim to improve cost effectiveness and health care service efficiency, through the provision of both TA and relevant IT equipment.

(2005/7 – M€ 1.6) Assessment, assistance in drafting and support to the Implementation of the National Strategy for the Fight against Drug Abuse (TA)

(2007 – M€ 1.5) Support to start-up and functioning of the Serbian Health Care Accreditation Agency (TA) – IPA 2007

(2011/15 – M€ 7.5) Implementation of hospital information systems – IPA 2008. The project supports the MoH in implementing previously developed software solutions in 18 hospitals throughout Serbia.

(2011/14 – M€ 3.3) Development of Palliative Health Care in Serbia – IPA 2010. The project supports the MoH in the development of comprehensive and modern systems of palliative care in Serbia, accessible to all patients who require such care, be they patients with cancer or non-cancer disease, adults or children. An over-arching principle is that access to relief of pain and to palliative care services is a basic human right. The goal of the project is to provide basic training and education in the principles and practice of palliative care to multi-disciplinary teams providing palliative care (doctors, nurses, sociologists, psychologist, volunteers, etc.) and students of medical and nursing schools throughout Serbia. 54 vehicles and hospital equipment for palliative care was supplied to the hospitals to this aim.

HEALTH SERVICE DELIVERY (≈ M€ 50)

(2001 – M€ 5.2) Assessment of Equipment Needs and the Rehabilitation of Hospital and Health Centre Equipment. Improving the quality of some basic services in hospitals and health centres by rehabilitating priority equipment through the supply of spare parts and consumables and the procurement of new equipment.

(2002 – M€0.35) Health Service Assessment. The study analysed the existing data, collected and compiled required data on infrastructure, human resources, utilization of equipment, services available, etc.

(2002 – M€ 0.5) Assessment of Selected Hospitals and the Clinical Centres in Serbia. Study aimed at carrying out an assessment of rehabilitation requirements in selected hospitals to prepare an M€50 EIB emergency assistance loan and recommendations for restructuring of the Clinical Centres in Serbia in preparation of a second EIB assistance loan.

(2002/3 – M€ 2.5) Assessment and Capacity Building of the Ministry of Health. Strengthening of the capacity of MoH to lead health system reform including the implementation of a M€ 50 EIB loan as emergency assistance to hospitals.

(2004 – M€ 2.7) Capacity Building for Tertiary Health Care. Defining policies and strategies for development and operation of tertiary care and supporting implementation of a second EIB emergency assistance loan - Clinical Centres.

(2004 – M€ 3.8) Development of Preventive Health Care. Improving preventive health services by addressing the major causes of morbidity and mortality in the population by means of establishing 25 Centres for Preventive Services in Serbian Primary Health Centres. Provision of related equipment.

(2004 – M€ 7.2) Technical assistance and provision of equipment and vehicles for the treatment and transport of medical waste in the Serbian health sector.

(2005 – M€ 4.9) Strengthening the Services of the Public Health Laboratories. TA to restructure and modernize PH Laboratories to achieve cost-effective services and centralize laboratory services through the establishment of Central Reference Laboratory.

(2006 – M€ 1) Direct grant to the European Investment Bank to provide TA in for the implementation of support of the reform of a loan for the modernisation of the four University Clinical Centres in Serbia.

(2007 – M€ 10) TA in support of the reform of Emergency Medical Services and the supply of 252 EMS Vehicles and relevant training Equipment. – IPA 2007

(2010/13 – M€ 5.3) Healthcare waste management – IPA 2008. The project was designed to contribute to the implementation of environmental and healthcare strategies that will ensure compatibility with EC legislation and best practices in sanitary standards. Both equipment (steam sterilizers and sharp-shredders) and technical assistance were supplied in continuation of a previously financed CARDS project.

(2011/13 – M€ 6.6) Support to the Implementation of the National Programme for Cancer Screening in the Republic of Serbia – IPA 2009. The project contributed to the improvement of the health and well-being of the population of Serbia by supporting the implementation of national cancer screening systems, by helping establish and operate the National Cancer Screening Office, strengthening human capacities by training and providing cancer screening equipment such as mammography and colonoscopy for institutions throughout the country.