

# APPLICATION OF WHO-ASPHER COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK FOR THE PUBLIC HEALTH WORKFORCE IN THE EUROPEAN REGION FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES IN UKRAINE

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## Abstract

The aim of the study is to analyze the practices of applying the WHO-ASPHER Competence Framework for the Public Health Workforce in the European Region in curriculum development for public health and assessment of training outcomes of public health educational programs in Ukraine. Using the bibliosemantic method, structural-logical analysis and content analysis, a study of normative documents of central executive bodies, documents of higher education institutions, units of quality assurance of education and other available sources of scientific and educational literature was conducted. It is determined that the evaluation of existing educational programs for public health at the bachelor's and master's levels of education, the development of a conceptual model of the "KROK" qualification exam (objective external independent assessment of professional competence) are to significantly increase the competitiveness and professionalism of public health resources due to the application of both national Ukrainian educational standards and WHO-ASPHER Competence Framework for the Public Health Workforce in the European Region.

**Key words:** Public health. Public health education in Ukraine. WHO-ASPHER competence framework.

## Introduction

The public health system as the single unified mechanism began its formation in Ukraine in 2016 with a landmark political statement of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, which proclaimed the purpose and principles of building a new public health system in the country [1]. In the same year, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine issued a Resolution "On approval of the Concept of development of the public health system", which acted as a trigger for building a national and regional public health systems in Ukraine [2]. Rapid creation and development of specialized structural components of the public health system both at the national (State Institution "Public Health Center of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine") and regional level (regional public health centers) has created a new challenge - deficit in the labor market of

public health workforce who would ensure the performance of the functions of the newly created structures. The country's higher education system promptly responded to the request of the practical public health system and since 2017 has introduced the specialty "Public Health" to the list of areas of knowledge and specialties for higher education. This started the process of training both bachelors and masters of public health in higher education institutions of Ukraine [3]. During 2018-2020, the relevant Standards of Higher Education for the specialty 229 "Public Health" for the first (bachelor's) and second (master's) levels of higher education were developed and approved by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine [4]. The standards regulate the issue of compliance of the content of education in the training of public health professionals in Ukraine with the requirements of the competencies developed by the WHO and the Association of Schools of Public Health of the European Region (ASPHER) [5].

**The aim of the study:** to analyze the practices of application of the WHO-ASPHER Competency Framework for the Public Health Workforce in the European Region to the training of public health professionals within the higher education system of Ukraine.

**Materials and methods.** A number of scientific research methods were used in the study: bibliosemantic, structural-logical analysis and content analysis. The materials of the study were the documents of the central executive authorities, regulatory documents of higher education institutions, units for quality assurance of education and available sources of scientific and educational literature.

**Results and discussion.** The initiative and management of the process of bringing educational programs and curricula of higher education institutions of Ukraine in line with the requirements and quality criteria of training of the WHO-ASPHER Competence Framework was taken by the Public Health Center of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine [6]. The first important step in this direction was the evaluation of educational programs on public health of Ukrainian educational institutions at the initiative of the Public Health Center in the framework of the Project "Support to Ukraine in the development of a modern public health system" funded by the European Union and implemented by GFA Consulting Group GmbH Hamburg in consortium with the Institute of Health and Welfare of Finland. A team of international experts, in collaboration with national experts, assessed the relevance of existing public health training programs for bachelor's and master's degrees against the WHO-ASPHER competencies [7]. The experts analyzed the educational programs and curricula for masters of 4 higher education institutions of Ukraine and bachelors of 2 higher education institutions. The content of educational programs was analyzed into three categories, consisting of ten sections, which contain a total of 84 competencies related to the ten essential public health operations. As

a result, experts provided clear recommendations for improving existing educational programs and training plans for public health professionals in higher education institutions of Ukraine [8]. The next important step in the implementation of the WHO-ASPHER Competence Framework into the system of training for public health professionals in Ukraine was the development of a conceptual model of the KROK exam for masters of public health. The KROK exam is an objective external independent assessment of professional competence, which takes place simultaneously throughout the country in the form of testing and is conducted by the Testing Center at the Ministry of Health of Ukraine. The main purpose of developing this conceptual model was coordinated use of Ukrainian national educational standard and the WHO-ASPHER competency framework for public health workforce in the European region and a comparative report on the content of public health master's programs in Ukrainian higher education institutions. As a result, an exam formula has been created that uses both the standard competencies of the Master of Public Health education standard for Ukraine and the WHO-ASPHER framework competencies. The list of professional competencies to be tested (according to the educational standard of the Master of Public Health) was compared and agreed with the matrices of the content of the topic / competence of the WHO-ASPHER Competence Framework. In the summer of 2021, for the first time, the national KROK exam was held for the first graduates of master's programs in public health in Ukraine in a pilot mode.

## **Summary**

Determination of the content of educational programs and curricula for the training of public health professionals is the prerogative and exclusive right of higher education institutions, as defined by their academic freedom. At the same time, it is important that the learning outcomes and competencies of the learners match the expectations of both national employers and the global public health system.

Implementation of measures to bring educational programs and curricula of public health training of higher education institutions of Ukraine in line with the requirements and quality criteria of the WHO-ASPHER Competence Framework will significantly increase the competitiveness and professionalism of public health personnel.

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