

STATEMENT
of the International Workshop on Healthcare Reform in Ukraine
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The Constitution of Ukraine, whose draft was widely discussed, proclaims 'an individual, his life and health' shall be recognised as 'the highest value'. The healthcare sector, that stands guard over this value, needs today a real reform to comply with the healthcare services standards and requirements set at EU level or commonly applied in many EU countries and to radically improve pay and working conditions of the healthcare workers.

However, despite these goals and demands of trade unions and society, the so-called healthcare reform, that affects the situation and interests of all Ukrainian citizens and health workers, is being carried out in the sector already substantially under-financed, without consulting the social partners, under the guise of 'optimisation and efficient, economical use of financial resources in the sector'.

It is carried out within the framework of liberalisation policy aimed at increasing private capital income while side-lining trade unions and general public from having a real impact on the process of discussion and approval of the state budget and inter-budgetary transfers that resulted in the marginalisation of the majority of people. The transformation of the public healthcare facilities to self-accounting entities actually funded from state and local budgets, the general introduction of payment for healthcare services, the drastic reduction of public spending, the reduction of the number of hospitals (primarily in-patient facilities) and cuts in staffing, the gradual privatisation of released property and the transfer of public hospitals to hospitals managed by private business have a catastrophic effect on the people's health. After privatisation of the primary healthcare, the government plans to change the healthcare funding mechanism. It intends to calculate the cost of services using a pricing system in the format of DRG (diagnosis-related groups). The cost under the DRG-system includes the whole complex of in-patient services for which a large part of Ukrainian people will not be able to pay. At the same time, it is still planned to calculate the cost of the consumer basket without including vital expenses for housing, health improvement, paid medical services and education. To clear the way for the reform, the priority task is to amend Article 49 of the Constitution of Ukraine that says that everyone has the right to healthcare, and Article 22 of the Constitution of Ukraine that enshrines the principle of guaranteeing constitutional rights and freedoms and stipulates the inability to abolish them, and to introduce changes in the Tax and Budget Codes and the Basic Laws of Ukraine on Healthcare, and Basic Laws on Solidarity Insurance. After that hospital services tariffs will be introduced. At the same time, the government does not intend to prohibit the so-called 'voluntary' donations to hospitals.

As a result, the health system in the Ukraine should be build upon the "classical" public services principles "universality", "accessibility", "affordability", "continuity", "user rights", "transparency and accountability".

Health services have to be organised to operate in the general interest of all citizens and patients. They have to be funded based on principles of solidarity in the context of tax systems and/or by social contributions paid to equal shares by employers and employees on their purchasing power.

When it comes to the social and labour relations sphere, this 'reform' further intensifies the huge shortage of healthcare personnel, and by far increases the healthcare workers' workload without adequate pay levels for the additional work, leads to decrease in real wages, creates conditions for corruption.

Physical and psychological exhaustion and syndrome of professional burnout of healthcare workers are mass phenomenon. All this leads to a sharp increase in social and labour and occupational and industrial conflicts in the healthcare sector that so far do not translate into mass protests only because of the war in the East of Ukraine. In this war it is the state healthcare system that successfully copes with the flow of wounded and mutilated people saving their lives. At the same time, the private clinics do not provide services without health insurance or payment for healthcare services. Public sector doctors and nurses, who often work under artillery fire and missile attacks, show amazing courage, but receive pennies for their dedicated work. Thousands of people would be completely deprived of healthcare without the healthcare personnel of the state hospitals.

As you know, the healthcare, once given in private hands, becomes prohibitively expensive, and poor citizens are unable to pay for it. Moreover, this means that the policy of healthcare commercialisation, being implemented under the IMF pressure, is vicious. Public investments in healthcare pay off for a sustainable economic development.

Replacement of the public healthcare by commercial healthcare will not solve, but only will increase problems of the doctors and patients, create conditions for dictate by business in one of the most important public sectors. Public investments in health care also pay off for a sound economic development, can help to prevent disabilities or early retirement and can promote healthy lifestyles. Today, the very right of citizens to free healthcare, guaranteed by Article 49 of the Constitution of Ukraine, is under threat.

We demand to harmonise all provisions of healthcare reform with the social partners in accordance with the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement.

We call upon public organisations of healthcare professional community, and civil organisations to struggle together against the antisocial healthcare reform, coordinate joint actions in defence of the healthcare in Ukraine.

Any delay will result in lost lives of those who cannot pay for healthcare services