



EUROPEAN UNION
DELEGATION TO THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

The Head of Delegation

Belgrade,
D(2014)

Dr Drasko Karadjinovic
Professor Dragana Jovanovic
Coordinators
NGO Doctors Against Corruption
www.healthcareanticorruption.org

Subject: Invitation to round table event on the health sector in Serbia

Dear Dr Karadjinovic, Prof Jovanovic,

Thank you for your invitation to a round table on the Serbian health sector, to be held on 6 February 2014. While we appreciate your effort dedicated to the improvement of health care in Serbia, we are not available to attend this event. As you know, we have investigated your allegations of misappropriation and corruption with regard to the Delegation and consider them to be unfounded. We have already responded to the substance of your various allegations in the past and regret that you continue to repeat incorrect and unfounded statements in spite of the clarifications provided to you.

We would like to reiterate once again our position on the concrete allegations:

1. The establishment of and support to the National Blood Transfusion Service in Serbia was a project supported with EU funding in 2002. This project was extensively examined and subject to reviews and investigations by the European Court of Auditors and the EU's Anti-fraud Service (OLAF). Those detailed reviews and investigations found no irregularities and your allegations were shown to be unfounded.
2. The emergency reconstruction project covering 20+1 hospitals came from a European Investment Bank (EIB) loan to Serbia worth EUR 50 million in 2003. This project was not managed by the EU Delegation. The EIB has stated that it considers it to be one of their most successful investments. The documentation alleging wrongdoings provided by your organisation was forwarded to OLAF immediately, as well as to the EIB. No evidence of wrongdoing was detected. At the same time, as a precaution we took steps to strengthen the monitoring of health care projects (constant external results oriented monitoring, on the spot checks, an impact evaluation on donor investments in the sector).
3. The project related to the reconstruction of the Institute of Virology, Vaccines and Sera "Torlak" is not EU funded. It is supported by the World Bank. The EU

Address: Vladimira Popovica 40/V, 11070 New Belgrade, Republic of Serbia
Tel: +381 11 3083200, Fax: +381 11 3083201, e-mail: Delegation-Serbia@eeas.europa.eu

<http://www.europa.rs/>

involvement was limited to the conduct of an assessment for the EIB should they decide to fund the development of a flu vaccine at this institute.

We share your view that significant problems and challenges remain in the Serbian health sector. We are also aware that some of the ongoing and past projects in the health sector here struggled to achieve their objectives. Further commitment, funding and support from national authorities are needed to complete reforms in the health sector successfully. The same is true in other sectors in Serbia, as reflected in the Commission's annual progress report. However, neither EU support nor EU Delegation staff can be held responsible for the situation of the health sector.

On the contrary, EU support to the health sector has made fundamental contributions to reforms and has achieved significant results. In the attached annex you will find a brief overview of the support which the EU has provided and results achieved. Important projects are continuing to improve access for disadvantaged groups, such as marginalised Roma families, to health care, to introduce palliative care in selected hospitals and to develop hospital information systems to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of patient care. The 21 mammographs and 28 mammography workstations, 18 colonoscopes and 252 fully equipped ambulances paid for by the EU are visible every day on the streets of Serbia and have been saving lives every day for 5 years.

I trust that these explanations will help you to reconsider your allegations.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Davenport", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Michael Davenport

Ambassador

Annex: Overview of health sector projects financed by the EU in Serbia

A list of EU supported health sector projects and achievements:

Emergency assistance (2000 – 2001)

Purchase, maintenance & repair of key equipment, essential medicines (mostly from local pharmaceutical industry).

Institutional capacity building (2002 – 2005)

Provision of advice on drug pricing & health reform legislation; establishing and building the National Medicines Agency (ALIMS); setting national guidelines for diagnosis, therapy and referral; supporting blood transfusion system reform (building and equipping the Nis Institute for Blood transfusion, equipping those in Novi Sad and Belgrade); establishing a School of Public Health; development of the basic services for a Health Information System; improving preventive services.

Health system management (2005 – 2006)

Strengthening the services of the Public Health Laboratories; capacity building of the Health Insurance Fund; IFI investment assistance; introduction of capitation payment in primary health care, training in health service management and setting up a Health Care Management Master Study at the Belgrade University.

Under IPA 2007-2013, around Euro 40 million were allocated to the health sector for the following completed and ongoing projects:

- **Implementing the National Strategy for fight against drug abuse:** technical assistance to assist the Ministry of Health in the preparation of the legal framework, education of 1,000 teachers in 1,400 schools throughout Serbia for preventive actions against drugs in schools, financing the ESPAD study of alcohol and substance abuse in high schools, launching a national campaign to fight drug abuse – *TVOJE NE MENJA SVE* (Your NO changes everything).
- **Support to the start-up and functioning of the Serbian Health Care Accreditation Agency** implementing health care quality standards and patient safety at all levels of care (hospitals, primary health care centres, pharmacies, laboratories, etc.).
- **Supply of emergency medical vehicles and equipment for Emergency:** technical assistance in support of the reform of Emergency Medical Services and the supply of 252 fully equipped emergency medicine vehicles and relevant training Equipment. Before this project Serbia had only 360 vehicles (36% of the country's needs) aged 16 years or less. The EU provided an addition of 70% to the dilapidated fleet and trained all staff in standard operating procedures.
- **Healthcare waste management:** the project contributed to the implementation of environmental and healthcare strategies ensuring compatibility with EU legislation and best practices in sanitary standards. Equipment (steam sterilizers and sharp-shredders) and technical assistance were supplied in continuation of a previously financed CARDS project. Historical pharmaceutical waste, including vaccines, was exported from the country to be destroyed abroad eliminating significant public health hazards.
- **Implementation of hospital information systems:** a project implemented by UNOPS/WHO is ongoing in support to the Ministry of Health in implementing its previously developed software solutions in 19 hospitals throughout Serbia. The

EU also provided all necessary IT equipment for these hospitals including physical networks and servers.

- **Support to the Implementation of the National Programme for Cancer Screening in the Republic of Serbia:** the project supported the establishment of national cancer screening systems, by helping create 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.
- **Development of Palliative Health Care in Serbia:** the project supports the Ministry of Health 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. The goal of the project is to provide basic training and education in the principles and practice of palliative care to multidisciplinary 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 were also supplied to hospitals as part of the project.
- **Implementation of the Strategy for fight against drugs - supply reduction component:** 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.

New projects:

In 2014, a new twinning project will commence with the Finnish Institute for Public Health aiming to support national efforts in the fight against the negative effects of tobacco smoke and the most frequent non-communicable diseases.

In 2014-2020, we plan to continue to support the health sector in areas that closely relate to the EU accession process, helping Serbia to meet the necessary standards in this field to join the EU.

For more information, please contact the EU Delegation.