



Fund “Nauka” Project № 19031 Resume – Competition-Based Session 2019:

“Training and professional realization of Public Health bachelors”

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Public Health (PH) programs are provided for Bachelor’s, Master’s and Doctor’s degrees. So far, there are no studies that systematically examine the needs, problems and models of Bachelor's degree in PH in Bulgaria and in Europe, as well as which of them best meet the priorities and challenges faced by the global PH.

Simultaneously with the problems of the content and organization of studies, the debates about the realization of graduates are gaining more and more power in the society. The idea of each training is to provide real job opportunities and prospects corresponding to the requirements of the labor market and the needs of society.

Against the background of a progressive staff shortage increase within the Bulgarian Healthcare System, especially now, in this global pandemic situation our society is in, with sufficient state, municipal and private structures, many Healthcare graduates cannot find realization in their field of study. The question is what the reasons for this paradox are, and so far, there is no research to systematically explain the low realization of Healthcare Bachelors and find ways to improve it. In addition, the need for health professionals will become increasingly critical to the proper functioning of all areas of life.

The goal of the project is to study and analyze the training provided for in a Bachelor’s program for PH specialists in Bulgaria and Europe and the opportunities/barriers for their professional realization.

To achieve this goal one needs: to study the organization and content of training provided for in a Bachelor’s program for PH specialists in the European region and compare the results with the existing Bulgarian standards; to establish the factors favoring or hindering the realization of PH specialists in our country and the normatively regulated requirements to the positions held.

Materials and methods: The main tools of the survey are: structured survey; focus group discussion and semi-structured interview. Sociological and statistical methods will be used to process and present the results of the survey.

Expected results: To establish: (1) the differences in training standards related to Bachelor's programs in PH, in Bulgaria and Europe; (2) the reasons for the lack of demand for PH specialists in a large part of the institutions for protection of public health in Bulgaria; (3) opportunities for overcoming the shortcomings in the training and realization of personnel in the Healthcare Sector.

Key words: Bachelors in Public Health, training, professional realization, health control, institutions related to public health protection.

Achieved results:

1. An in-depth historical review of the prerequisites and developments of the Bachelor level Public Health education in Bulgaria;
2. A comprehensive analysis of the organization of training in undergraduate public health programs in Europe has been carried out, which proves that: in Eastern Europe, bachelor PH degrees are offered mainly in medical universities and colleges, and in Western Europe education is conducted mainly in multiprofile universities; most of the academic programs have 3 years duration, full-time studies in the national language, with 180 credits awarded; positive trend in Eastern European universities, including Bulgarian universities, is the higher share of practical training and the higher student workload;
3. The analysis of the content of the undergraduate PH programs in Europe according to the main areas recommended by ASPHER proves that all of them are part of the programs in both Western and Eastern Europe:
 - ✓ Disciplines related to the current PH challenges such as “Health Inequalities”, “Global Health”, “Health Information Technology and Systems”, “Population Aging”, “Leadership and Management”, “Quality Research Methods” and “PH Genomics” are insufficiently presented in both European regions;
 - ✓ At the center of PH education in Bulgaria and the countries of Eastern Europe are disciplines related to hygiene and epidemiology of infectious diseases and a significant number of clinical disciplines. The latter are not a part of the Western European programs;
4. Comparison of the professional competencies developed by ASPHER with the USR Ordinance on the professional “Public Health” field proves that:
 - ✓ The USR only partially covers the main Public Health areas as defined by ASPHER: “Research Methods for Public Health”, “Public Health and its social, economic and political determinants”, “Health education and health promotion”. For the areas of health policy, economy, organizational theory, leadership and management there are no disciplines provided in the USR;
 - ✓ The national requirements for the “Public Health Inspector” specialty provide an important part of the competence of Public Health bachelors in relation to the control of environmental factors and disease surveillance, but guarantee, to a much lesser extent, building of skills and knowledge in public health research, development and management of health intervention programs, project management, health education and communication. They are of key importance for the effective implementation of modern activities and the requirements set by technological progress and global priorities in the field of Public Health;
 - ✓ The comparative studies of the Bachelor Public Health training in Europe and the analysis of the correspondence between the national requirements and the recommendations of ASPHER show that an update of the USR is needed;
5. The leading factors hindering the professional realization of bachelors in PH in Bulgaria have been determined;
6. The factors hindering the career development and professional growth of the graduating bachelors in public health in Bulgaria have been determined;
7. The factors supporting the professional realization of PH bachelors in Bulgaria have been determined;

8. The legislation related to the requirements for training, appointment and work of “Professional Bachelors in ...” as well as the institutions that operate in the field of Public Health in Bulgaria has been assessed;
9. The analysis of the presented own results and conclusions in the field of training and realization of Bachelors in Public Health in Bulgaria and Europe helped formulating recommendations for solving the existing problems in several directions:
 - ✓ National policy for the development of Public Health personnel;
 - ✓ Public Health Policy and Management at the institutional level;
 - ✓ Training and educational institutions.

The pandemic today has shown everyone that the health systems and institutions responsible for PH of Europe’s population need well-trained and educated health professionals.

In Bulgaria, the problems are no less significant and painful requiring joint and collective efforts of educational structures, institutions, the state and society.