

## FINAL REPORT

### 1. Identification

- Twinning light Project No. TLP 01/35
- Final Report
- Submitted by: Carlos Garcia de Cortazar

### 2. Executive summary

All the activities undertaken since the project started, on 1<sup>st</sup> April, have pursued the main target to be achieved according to the terms of the covenant, which is ensuring the preparedness of the Slovak *Liaison Body* for the direct implementation of EU Regulations 1408/71 and 574/72, concerning the export of health insurance benefits in kind as well as managing of refunding costs derived from them.

As it happens in other member States - included Spain, the so called *Liaison Body* located in the General Health Insurance Company, GHIC, works separately from the competent Ministry on health matters, developing its duties and capacities in close cooperation with other smaller insurance companies all over the Slovak territory. Due to this structure of the Slovak Public Social Security System, all the activities implemented in order to achieve the expected results have been addressed to officials from all the institutions involved.

Training and information have been faced in two different ways.

First activity in this field was the study visit that eight employees from the Slovak health insurance companies involved in the project made to Spain from 25<sup>th</sup> of April to 1<sup>st</sup> of May. For one week, these representatives from the *Liaison Body* and relevant departments of other Slovak insurance companies with responsibilities in implementing the EU rules on health assistance had the opportunity to know the practical application of them within the territory of another Member State on a daily basis; what was quite interesting indeed, considering that this activity was over the day before the official accession of the Slovak Republic to the EU.

Six seminars dealing with the topics concerned were held from May to July, following the last schedule agreed between the partners, as attached to the Start-up report.

The first seminar, on sickness and maternity benefits, took place during the period considered under the Start-up report.

Since then, five more seminars, of which content and schedule are detailed under point 4, were held, as set out in the last agenda attached to Start-up report.

The last training activity was a workshop, as it was written in above mentioned report. Its content was already defined on the occasion of the meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> of July with the representatives from the Ministry of Health, as it is explained under point 4 below, after taking in consideration the previous requirements from attendants. .

Regarding the flow of information, a permanent source of communication was created among employees and the Twinning Light expert, since all the officials concerned felt free in order to expose their doubts and questions related to the subjects dealt during seminars and others connected to them, either by phone, personally or, which was most usual, by email. With the help of an interpreter, the employees made their questions and the expert sent an answer, after consultation with other Spanish experts, when necessary.

The expected result of enabling relevant employees to carry out their responsibilities as regards to the implementation of EU Regulations 1408/71 and 574/72 on health assistance within the Slovak Republic is granted, as it comes out from their actual work after the effective accession. The practical difficulties which may have arisen in the daily work, when being already operational the Liaison Body, were showed and solved by the specialized Spanish experts on the subjects. The active participation of attendants, who are actually dealing with the above mentioned issues and their interest in concrete points requiring immediate solution, reveal an acquired knowledge on the matters, which will make the Liaison Body successfully operational from now. At this point, we cannot forget to mention the fact that, due to the delay in the starting of the project, at the time of the first training activities, Slovakia was already a new EU MS, with an administrative structure, which should be ready to assume its obligations immediately after the accession.

The present twinning provided the existing structures with a kind of know- how in order to improve their capacities.

As regards to the guidebook to be issued by the end of the project, the steps for its elaboration were followed, as explained under point 4, respecting the agreements adopted: first in April, then at the meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> July, concerning both technical and scheduled items.

The result was a concise practical guide to be distributed to employees and general staff of insurance companies containing the main topics related to health care within the EU, in compliance with the “acquis communautaire”.

### **3. Background**

Since the effective accession of the Slovak Republic to the EU on 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2004, the Slovak public health system should be immediately affected by the EU Regulations 1408/71 and 574/72, on health assistance and cost refunding within the territory of the states concerned. The mentioned rules, as well as the Decisions and Recommendations of the Administrative Committee for Social Security of Migrant Workers must be applied from the beginning by the officials concerned at different levels.

To make the above possible without any delay, the *Liaison Body* needs to be operational after the accession, shall improve and develop its capacity in terms of human resources

and technology, moreover, considering the structure of the Slovak health system, where four other insurance companies work in cooperation with the General Health Insurance Company.

Lack of experience either in export of benefits in kind or settlement of financial and information flow- required for successful implementation of EU Regulations -justified the present twinning light project.

Although the GHIC was designated to operate as *Liaison Body* in time of accession, there was a new legal Act in the Parliament, discussing in September, proposing to establish new office - Health Care Surveillance Authority to function continuously as a Liaison body from 1.1.2005.

However, since this twinning light was planned for quite a short period, there was not any change which might have made it not operational; and the beneficiaries of the achieved results were the same for the whole period covered.

Another factor which could have had a negative impact in training and development of guidebook contents was that also some modifications and amendments of the Regulations concerned were to be officially published at the beginning of the project.

That was a reality before completing the activities, but we have to point out the professional background of the employees at the CGIH, who were fully updated on the matter in advance.

#### **4. Summary of the Twinning light activities during the reporting period**

##### **Training**

According the original schedule attached to Spanish proposal only first seminar was organized. The evaluation of Seminar 1 is already mentioned in Start- up report.

Seminar2 on European Health Card [EHIC], from 2 to 3 June /2 working days/

The Spanish short-term experts Victoria Aparicio and Teresa Lopez ran the sessions, with a practical content. Around 30 people attended the seminar and participated actively in it.

Seminar 4, on E-forms, from 15 to 18 June /4 working days/

The Spanish short-term experts Belen Callejo and Sara Garcia provided with practical issues regarding the forms required in the field of health assistance, giving an updated overview of their validity and obligation.

The number of participants was wider than usual, due to the high importance of the subject; so, it was necessary to arrange a bigger room in one of the Insurance Companies involved. We might say this seminar, which was actually developed as a workshop, was the most interesting for employees and officials from all the institutions concerned and the attendants did not decrease in any of the sessions, where the level of initiative and active participation was quite remarkable.

Seminar 6, on Telematics, from 21 to 24 June /3,5 working days/

The Spanish short-term experts Francisco Delgado and Victoria Aparicio dealt with technical issues and procedures affecting the Liaison Body when implementing EU Regulations.

This seminar was split into four different parts, according to the previous discussion about its content taken place in Spain at the occasion of the study visit in April.

The first day a workshop was appointed, so that the employees involved in telematic items could have the opportunity to present their doubts and practical questions on the subject to the experts.

The second day a more theoretical session was aimed at informing high-level officials with responsibilities in telematics.

The third day the objective was spreading practical knowledge to the IT technicians.

Finally, the third session was held in order to clarify and solve the initial questions made during the first day.

As regards to this seminar, we may point out the fact that the level of participation was not so wide. Maybe due to the difficulty of selecting the attendants, because of very specialised topic, considering their required specialization and as well to the fact that nobody from this group took part in the study visit

Due to the fact, that Seminars 2,4 and 6 were not organised according to agreed schedule in original proposal, MoH insisted to have clarification from Spanish partner on schedule modification. This was finally solved at the meeting organised by Representation of European commission on 28 of June, where was agreed, that modification will be attached to the Start up report as annex.

In line with approved modification following seminars were organised:

Seminar 5, on reimbursement of costs, on 29 June /1 working day/.

The Spanish short-term experts Teresa Lopez and Jose Maria Marco gave a practical lecture about the application of EU rules on reimbursement of sanitary costs. Around 30 people attended the session.

Seminar 3, on the European Court of Justice, from 27 to 29 July /2 working days/.

The Spanish short-term expert Ana Gonzalez and the Spanish Project Leader explained the most important rulings and case law on the subject. Around 30 people attended the sessions, and they ran in a very living way, becoming fully interactive from both sides.

Regarding the organisation of above mentioned seminars, twinning light expert sent program in advance to the Slovak counterpart and MoH distributed the program and invitation letters to participants. At the beginning of each seminar all the materials to be discussed were distributed to the attendants, translated into Slovak. Consecutive interpretation Spanish-Slovak-Spanish was provided in every session.

Conference facilities and technical means required were provided by the beneficiary institution of the project, whose employees have been closely cooperating with the TWL expert the entire project.

Due to some saving in the budget because of modification in seminars schedule and their utilisation in the project and necessity to discuss the content of the last 7 seminar or workshop, second monthly meeting was held at the Ministry of Health on 26<sup>th</sup> of July, with participation of representatives from the MoH, GHIC, one representative from CFCU and the Spanish PL and twinning light expert. The agenda was following:

- Start up report
- usage of savings, addendum regarding the involvement of additional 4<sup>th</sup> expert and budgetary changes above 10% of the contract value
- final workshop
- draft of the guidebook

It was agreed, the final seminar will be provided as 3-days workshop with final closing conference on 4<sup>th</sup> day. However there were no budget allocation for funding the final conference (venues, refreshment) therefore the Spanish partner proposed to cover all expenses from their own budget (from the flat rate).

In order to make the workshop possible with the participation of all proposed experts, it was necessary to produce an addendum to the contract, since originally it was agreed that only 2 experts would come for that activity and Mr. Garcia de Cortazar would come as PL. Nevertheless, due to budgetary reasons, this could not have happened and PL came as an expert, and one more expert was included.

At the same time, the Spanish PL made a proposal to the Slovak counterpart, regarding to budget reallocation concerning the enlargement of permanent twinning light expert stay in Bratislava.

Additionally, the following conclusions were settled on the meeting:

- the Spanish PL would sent by fax his request for budget reallocation concerning last seminar and increasing of twinning light expert staying to CFCU. Once, the CFCU produced the addendum to the contract, it would be delivered to both PL, who should have signed the final text and sent it back to CFCU. The CFCU would have to shifted the Addendum to EC Representation in Bratislava, taking the final text effect from the date of the notification from this side.

-regarding the content of last workshop, Slovak participants had to sent to the twinning light expert a list containing the main topics which the employees from health insurance companies would like to discuss more in depth during the last workshop. Taking into account what the attendants would really appreciate would make a dynamic development of sessions with the aim to solve actual problems arising in their daily work.

The final list of topics to be dealt was summarised by twinning light expert, who made a short compendium with the most required topics and shifted it to the Spanish PL, so he could designate appropriate short term-experts to come for the workshop in September.

- two different dates were proposed for timing of last workshop. It was settled that the partners would take a decision within next days, after consultation with the institutions involved. It was finally agreed to be from 27 to 29 September.

Near before the last workshop, a working meeting was held on 16<sup>th</sup> of September to discuss all details about ensuring and organising the final conference and distribution of responsibilities between partners. The agenda was following:

- 7<sup>th</sup> seminar
- guidebook
- organising the conference
- side letter regarding the exchange of one expert in 7<sup>th</sup> workshop from personal reasons.

Workshop, [seminar 7], on general issues concerning rules and forms, from 27 to 29 September /3 working days/

The Spanish short-term experts Sara Garcia, Carmen Garcia, Francisca Prada and Carlos Garcia de Cortazar - also PL - ran practical sessions on the main subjects according to the requirements from participants in former training activities, with the support of the TWL expert.

#### Final conference

As the parties agreed, the final conference took place immediately after the last workshop, on 30<sup>th</sup> September. Following the decision made on 16<sup>th</sup> September, the twinning light expert together with Slovak project manager should elaborate the list of participants to be invited on behalf of Slovak and Spanish side. Secondly, both had to prepare the text of the invitation and Slovak manager had finalised the official invitation and distributed it among invited persons. Finally, in close cooperation both had to ensure the conference room, place for the reception, catering, interpretation, technical equipments of room etc.

Although it was originally planned to provide only consecutive interpretation Slovak-Spanish-Slovak, it was finally assumed the necessity of granting simultaneous interpretation and also to English, taking in consideration the assistance of some guests from other nationalities.

The invitations were sent by MoH in the name of both PL. Around 50 people were invited to both events, conference and reception. Journalists and representatives from media were invited only for the conference.

The first event was held from 10,30 to 12,15. Both Project Leaders, high level officials from the Slovak Ministry of Health and from the GHIC, the Spanish ambassador, representative of European Commission Representation and the twinning light expert, made their short speeches and showed the achievements reached according to the expectations of the different parts involved in the twinning. At the end of all the interventions, a short press conference went on. During the event, the guidebook was exposed at the disposal of the participants.

After finishing the official part, the guests moved to the Governor's palace where the reception had been organised and enjoyed it in a very friendly atmosphere.

#### Guidebook

The first draft of the guidebook, what was one of the tasks of the twinning light expert, was elaborated in close cooperation with representatives from the GHIC. All topics proposed by Slovak side, as they were included in the proposal sent to TWL expert by the middle of June, and which were widely discussed at several informal meetings between

the TWL expert and those officials, were included in the draft. On 26<sup>th</sup> of July the first official draft of the guidebook was presented, already in Slovak version. Afterwards, it was revised by the Spanish PL and sent to the Slovak counterparts on 29<sup>th</sup> of July for comments to be included.

#### Twinning light expert missions

The first period of the twinning light expert staying in Bratislava was over on 29<sup>th</sup> July. The twinning light expert came back to Bratislava on 7<sup>th</sup> September and started to work again on the 8<sup>th</sup>. During her last period the main tasks under her responsibility were organizing the last training activity, issue the guidebook and collaborating with the final conference arrangements.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> September, the TWL expert met the Slovak PL and the project manager in order to settle the final steps to achieve the targeted results by the end of the month the Concerning workshop, the TWL expert informed about the four short-term experts coming. At the same time, she delivered a side letter regarding the exchange of one short-term expert in the 7<sup>th</sup> workshop due to personal reasons. As usual, the Slovak part sent invitations to participants. The time schedule for the workshop was settled, although no concrete program was proposed, since attendants should feel free to make their questions and show their own opinions and comments.

As regards the guidebook, the twinning light expert showed the final version she prepared to be printed, after having included the comments made by the representatives from the Ministry of Health and from the GHIC. These comments were revised by the Spanish PL, who gave his conformation to the final version, which reached a total of 28 pages. She left the guidebook on the diskette the Ministry.

Finally, TWL expert converted the text to the final format and size and discussed the last technical arrangements with the printing company. As far the project funds allowed, 1000 copies of the guidebook were ordered and were distributed.. All insurance companies received 900 copies of guidebook for their employees during the 7<sup>th</sup> workshop /180 copies per each insurance company/ , 50 copies were given to Ministry of Health and the last 50 copies were distributed to guests during the final conference.

The guidebook was translated into English for the purpose of the present report, although only the dissemination of the Slovak version was granted under the expected results of the project.

The final conference was the last activity of project and 30<sup>th</sup> of September was also the last working day of the twinning light expert.

#### **5. Evaluation of the Twinning light project**

The professional content of the project, related to the workload of the Spanish experts during seminars and study visit was on high level and very appreciated by Slovak attendants. All experts were good experienced in relevant field and were able to provide their knowledge very practical way during seminars in friendly atmosphere. They were willing to solve all problems that Slovak experts were dealing with during their short praxis.

Also, the presence of Spanish experts was accepted by Slovak partners due to very good cooperation between them and Slovak side during previous PHARE twinning project coordinated by Slovak Ministry of labour, social affairs and family about 2 years ago.

In spite of the previous twinning project, present project was created as twinning light, it means, duration was shorter and coordination of particular activities was more responsibility of the twinning light partner.

This was a reason, why some misunderstandings at the beginning of the project, regarding the responsibilities for organisational issues, occur. In the original project fiche, following by Terms of reference for twinning light was request from the Slovak Ministry of health to have twinning light partner in the Slovakia, ensuring whole organisational matters within the project. On the other hand, the Spanish twinning light expert expected to have some assistant to help her to ensure all organisational and administrative matters. From the nature of the Twinning light project, such a projects are composed from simple activities of short duration and their realisation should be ensured by TWL expert.

Taking in consideration these problems at the beginning of the project, the MoH secured some organisational issues of particular activities for successful running of the project.

In spite of the above written, the successful coordination of the different elements involved in training issues, such as moving experts, providing material, translation and interpretation, facilities etc, contributed to reach the expected results. The former experience of the Spanish staff has been definitively a “plus “for its achievement.

During the lifetime of the project, some modifications of originally proposed activities occurred, initiated by Spanish partner. However, such a changes must be properly administered according to valid PHARE Twinning light rules, MoH insisted on implementation of these rules by any modification. Moreover, some proposed changes had influenced the budget lines more than 10% of contracted budget, what required even the Addendum.

All the training activities took place in time in compliance with agreed schedule, with the assistance of the experts nominated in the contract. Also materials to be dealt were provided in time to participants. High number of participants in each seminar showed the interest in the content of the seminars. Only in one case, the telematics, the presence of participants was lower due to very narrow specialisation of this topic. Also the number of relevant employees in health insurance companies dealing with this issue is small.

The constant interest showed by the attendants at the ongoing activities and their motivation when taking part actively may come to the conclusion that from an overall point of view, this component was rather successful.

In the same way, to achieve in time the guidebook, what was one of the expected results under the requests from the Slovak side has to be mentioned. .

The initial discussions about the content that the final version should have come to a final agreement between the Ministry and the beneficiary institution, with the mediation of the Spanish partner. Since then, the next steps to the manual to be printed were followed by all the bodies involved. Both first draft and final versions as well as the revised version in



between were produced and delivered within the scheduled times and printing work was ready before the closing session.

Regarding the targeted operational *Liaison Body*, once again the delay in the signature and endorsement of the contract may be considered as a handicap in the sense, that project started only one month before effective accession of the Slovak Republic to EU become official.

Anyway, this cannot be considered as a failure for the twinning itself, moreover, in practice that gave the partners the opportunity to work closer face to real requirements. One factor really helpful was the fact that at that time, the former candidate country was already participating as an observer at meetings of the Committees in Brussels.

## **6. Conclusion and Recommendations**

As it was undoubtedly explained under different points of the present report, in spite of the problems with ensuring the organisational issues at the beginning of the project and modifications of time schedule and number of experts which may arise during the implementation of a twinning project, the global objective of this twinning light has been reached, so as to accomplish the previous request from the Slovak partner, what was the preparedness of the Slovak administration and insurance companies to participate in the Community system of Social Security coordination in the area of free movement of persons, by means of improving human resources and working organization within the Slovak *Liaison Body* in order to implement EU Regulations 1408/71 and 574/72 in the field of health insurance benefits export and cost refunding.

As a direct consequence of the above, the expected results have been successfully achieved.

Information and training aiming at enabling the capacity of GHIC relevant employees to assume the functions and duties of the *Liaison Body* in compliance with EU Regulations, was achieved within finally agreed schedule of seminars described under points 2 and 4. None of them was cancelled, and training was mostly over by the first half of the project. Concerning information, it was a task ever fluent all over the project. This was indeed the purpose of the study visit to the Spanish institutions, where the exchange of knowledge between both partners was as broad as time allowed. Also the communication with the Spanish experts and the twinning light expert was immediately granted by electronic or personal-when possible- means, without any formal requirements.

Operational *Liaison Body* was a reality, even under the special circumstances related to the important changes, as mentioned in point 2.

Technical guidebook was issued before the final activities of the project. After former discussions, the following steps to the final printed version were faced with no delay. The twinning light expert prepared a draft in Slovak, which was submitted to the representatives from GHIC for correction and comments. Afterwards, a new draft was revised by the Spanish PL and sent to the Ministry of Health. Some comments from the representatives from the Ministry were taken into consideration and added to that draft by

the Spanish PL, and this final version was showed to both representatives from Ministry and GHIC before printing.

This book is a very concise and clear small manual containing the main topics in the field of health care benefits in kind to be observed by officials at the time of implementing EU Regulations 1408/71 and 574/72. The easy format given to it will certainly ensure it as a useful and helpful working tool for future.

Although it was planned to be officially introduced at the occasion of the public final conference organized at the end of operational implementation of the project, some volumes were already distributed to participants at the last workshop.

As a final conclusion, a general success must be settled, according to expectations. We came to the whole implementation of the project, and none of the targeted activities was cancelled.

### **Recommendations of implementing partner**

1 It is necessary to follow with the trainings, especially training of employees at regional and local levels. The persons who have participated in the twinning are quite able to continue with this task

2 It is very convenient to begin negotiations with those countries which receive migrant workers from Slovakia or send migrant workers to Slovakia or receive tourists from Slovakia or send tourists to Slovakia, for intending to speed the reimbursements of costs of the benefits in kind provided outside of the competent State. A payment in advance of 80% would be desirable

3 The lump sums reimbursements according to article 94 and 95 of the application Regulation are difficult to calculate for Slovakia. It could be very important for Slovakia to begin negotiations with all Member States for changing this kind or reimbursements to real costs. Many countries could accept this proposal.

4 For avoiding misunderstandings, would be very important to inform the persons insured who want to travel abroad, that they are not entitled to receive benefits in kind outside of the competent State except if they have an urgent need. Health tourism is not allowed.

5 The European Health Card has to be prepared in the next future. Slovakia has the know-how for implementing this task. Nevertheless it is a need to begin just now with it and not to wait until the last moment.

6 The Ministry of Health has to coordinate all the Health Companies. A coordination meeting every three months would be desirable, especially for preparing the meetings of the Administrative Commission

7 Slovakia has to defend its interests face other Member States. This means that very often it will be obliged to reject reimbursements when are not according the provisions of the coordination rules.

8 Slovakia has to improve the telematic exchanges especially for updating the credits that other State has to reimburse. Sometimes it is very difficult to get paid because of administrative problems. For this reason all the invoices have to be clear and in the right form.

9 It is very important to follow carefully the rulings of The Court of Justice .The Health care sector will be in the next future one of the most important field due to its link with the free provision of services. Although Slovakia would be not direct involved in the ruling it is always very convenient to present observations and to be present in the public audience.

10 The continuity of the persons who have participated in the twinning in their present workings places it is a guarantee for the good application of the coordination rules. Changes at this state are not recommendable.

11 To update this twinning, would be reasonable to implement its continuity in one year. This could offer the possibility to evaluate the application of Regulation 1408/71 by the Slovakian Administration and to correct some mistakes and errors.