

**SESSION 3: INFORMAL PAYMENTS AND HEALTH CARE CONSUMERS****PROJECT PRESENTATION:****“PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS INFORMAL PATIENT PAYMENTS IN SIX CEE COUNTRIES”**

Presented by:

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**ABSTRACT:**

Informal patient payments are deeply rooted in Central and Eastern European countries. Despite the socio-political changes in the health care sectors after 1990s and the subsequent health care reforms, informal payments for health care services continue to serve patients' and physicians' interests. These payments also fill gaps in health care funding in this European region. Nevertheless, unofficial payments are not a desirable payment channel. They lack transparency and distort the efficiency and equity in health care provision. Still, the successful elimination of these payments will depend on the public attitude towards these payments.

This study aims to compare public attitudes towards informal patient payments in six Central and Eastern European: Bulgaria, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Ukraine. The data were collected in 2010 in nation-wide representative surveys using an identical standardized questionnaire administrated via face-to-face interviews.

The results show that a major group of respondents in each country expresses a negative attitude towards both cash informal payments and gifts in-kind. Bulgarians, Polish, and Romanians prevail in that cluster. Hungarian and Lithuanian respondents compose the majority in a cluster where cash payments and gifts in-kind are accepted in mostly positive way. The third cluster includes respondents with negative attitude towards cash payments but positive towards giving gifts (22%). The smallest cluster (13%) consists of indifferent public attitudes.

The existence of positive and indifferent attitudes towards informal payments as reported in our study, indicates a challenge for policy makers in Central and Eastern European countries. The acceptance of government initiatives aimed at the elimination of informal payments will largely depend on the governments' ability to create a social resistance towards these payments.

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