

The Editors of the South Eastern European Journal of Public Health express their deepest sorrow about the death of one of our most prominent members of the Editorial Board, Professor Luka Kovačić, founder of the Stability Pact's Forum for Public Health in South Eastern Europe (FPH-SEE) in 2000/2001 and strong supporter of the creation of this journal.

Genc Burazeri (Tirana, Albania and Maastricht, The Netherlands)

Ulrich Laaser (Bielefeld, Germany)

Jose Martin-Moreno (Valencia, Spain)

Peter Schröder-Bäck (Maastricht, The Netherlands)

Obituary Professor Luka Kovacic, MD, PhD

Professor Luka Kovačić, MD, PhD, specialist in social medicine and organization of health care, retired full professor of the School of Medicine, University of Zagreb, passed away on 21 April 2015 fatigued by incurable malignant disease.



Luka Kovačić was born on 13 October 1940 in a small town Đurđevac some 100 km north of Zagreb in the area called Podravina, where he attended primary school and finished gymnasium in Koprivnica. He graduated from the School of Medicine in Zagreb in 1965, and after a few years of medical practice he joined the Andrija Štampar School of Public Health which is a part of the School of Medicine, University of Zagreb. There he spent practically his entire working lifetime. He earned both, MSc and PhD degrees from the University of Zagreb, School of Medicine in 1972 and 1983. In his academic career he advanced from the assistant position at the Chair for Hygiene, Social Medicine, and Epidemiology through positions as assistant professor (1984) and associate professor (1988) to full professorship (2003). He completed the specialization in social

medicine and organization of health care successfully in 1974. He was also trained in Sweden (1964), Scotland (1966), USA (1968 and 1971, when he was trained in Public Health, Epidemiology and Research Methods at the Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health in Baltimore), Finland (University of Kuopio, 1977) and Alma-Ata (WHO training in Planning and Management in 1985). He paid study visits or served as a consultant in the UK, the USSR, Kazakhstan, Sudan, Cameroon, India, Iran (UNDP), Nigeria (WHO) and elsewhere.

At the Andrija Štampar School of Public Health he used to held numerous posts and responsibilities: he was a head of the Department for Hygiene, Social Medicine and Epidemiology 1993-1997 and after its dissolution in three smaller departments in 1997 he continued to chair the Department for Social Medicine and Organization of Health Care; he was deputy coordinator from 1984 and coordinator 1997-2000 of the WHO Collaborating Centre for Primary Health Care. He served as an assistant to the director and deputy director (1984-2004) and finally as the director of the School from 2004 till his retirement in 2006.

He served firstly as the coordinator and later as director (1990-1996) of the International 9-week course "Planning and management of primary health care in developing countries" which was held 16 times between 1978 and 1996 at the Andrija Štampar School of Public Health with the support of the Government of The Netherlands and had altogether more than 350 participants coming from 66 countries. Luka Kovacic was active member of the Croatian Medical Association, president of its Section for Social Medicine and Organization of Health Care (1978-1986). Later the section changed its name into the Society for Public Health with him as president (1986-1999). His activities and duties were so numerous, both within his institution and in the broader Croatian and international context, that we mentioned only those mostly pronounced or internationally visible.

Luka was a gifted and dedicated teacher, mentor of six MSc theses and one PhD dissertation as well as altogether more than 200 diploma works for medical and nursing students at the School of Medicine and School of Applied Health Sciences. He was principal investigator in many domestic projects and played a leading role in several international projects and networks. He actively participated in the work of the European network of districts "Tipping the Balance Toward Primary Health Care" (TTB) from 1987, being also its Chairman of the Board and President of the Assembly from 1997 to 2005, and the coordinator of the whole network and the project "TTB Second Decennial Survey of the Health Needs and Health Care for Older People in Europe", which was implemented in five European countries including Croatia in 2005-2006. He was also a member of the European Society for Public Health and its Scientific Committee since 2000.

The cooperation between the School of Public Health, University of Bielefeld and public health academic institutions in ten South Eastern European (SEE) countries started in the year 2000 under his able leadership together with professor Ulrich Laaser, supported by the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe. Professor Luka Kovačić contributed enormously to the establishment of the Forum for Public Health in South Eastern Europe (FPH-SEE) as a network of academic institutions, aiming at the reestablishment of professional cooperation between public health teachers and professionals in SEE. As the result of this cooperation six book volumes were prepared and published between 2004 and 2010 encompassing altogether more than 4300 pages, containing some 250 teaching modules authored by more than 200 authors. Among them professor Kovačić co-edited the volume "Management in Health Care Practice" and authored four modules therein.

Luka Kovačić was retired less than 9 years ago but he continued to be active and involved in teaching, especially in postgraduate specialist programmes and the PhD programme "Medicine and Health Sciences" where he coordinated courses in Research Methods in Public Health. Also at the School of Applied Health Sciences in Zagreb he taught several subjects and mentored diploma works. He was a full member of the Croatian Academy of Medical Sciences where he chaired the College of Public Health and participated in the work of the Committee for food and the Committee for telemedicine to which he was previously president during two terms.

Professor Luka Kovačić has published almost 200 scientific and professional articles and edited several books, among them also a textbook in Social Medicine. He coordinated a number of national and international projects and networks, and has organized numerous national and international conferences in the field of public health and health care organization.

Condolence arrived to family Kovačić and his colleagues from many institutions and individuals not only from Croatia but also from abroad, especially from colleagues from the South Eastern European countries.

Their words once again proved not only how much professor Kovačić was respected as an expert, but also how he was appreciated and loved as a co-worker, colleague and teacher.

Professor Luka Kovacic will remain in our memory forever as a creative and responsible teacher, an excellent organizer, a competent expert, but above all as a colleague and a friend always ready to assume obligations and help others, a modest and friendly man. A number of colleagues, former students, associates and friends from all over Croatia together with those coming from neighbouring countries joined his beloved ones, his wife Marija, sons Mladen and Damir, brother, daughters in law and four lovely grandchildren at his funeral as well as at the commemoration held in the Andrija Štampar School of Public Health on May 12 to pay a tribute to a conscientious and gifted teacher, diligent and organized scientists but above all to the dear colleague, a man who did not have and could not have enemies, because he was gentle and always ready to help, both students and colleagues.

Only ten days after Luka passed away the Global Public Health Curriculum was published in the South Eastern European Journal of Public Health (SEEJPH) including two modules (2.1 and 2.8) he authored. So it happened that his last two teaching texts appeared in SEEJPH,

Let there be glory and praises to Luka Kovačić!

May he rest in peace!

On behalf of the

Andrija Štampar School of Public Health, School of Medicine, University of Zagreb

Prof. Jadranka Bozиков

Selected papers of Professor Luka Kovacic:

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