

#eHealth: Time for a Cultural Shift in the Health and IT Sectors

Counting a lot of single doctor offices and 357 hospitals in the European Union, healthcare is one of the most fragmented industries, with each entity being more or less independent and operating as a private business, even if some are public entities. Hence, creating a new market and value network in this area requires disruptive innovation and a good timing. In this sector, instant global internet communication is more generally used to monitor or report diseases and thereby increase health providers' knowledge and possibilities to predict or minimise eventual harms to the public health. Despite, people are concerned about their own state of health and digital tools for citizen empowerment along with person-centred care become always more important. Luxembourg has therefore decided to put an emphasis on molecular diagnostics, the cornerstone of personalised medicine.

At European level, the Commission has published a *Communication on Digital Transformation of Health and Care in the Digital Single Market* on 25 April 2018. The idea is to personalise medicine through shared European data infrastructure, to support the supply of digital tools allowing users and healthcare providers to interact and to enable citizens to access their health data across the European Union. Especially in a context of free movement of citizens, a digital single market with continuous and qualitative healthcare should be certain, also for those who travel, work or live in another Member State. The eHealth Digital Services Infrastructure (eHDSI) is a European project which aims at setting up and deploying generic cross-border services like e.g. electronic prescription¹ or patient summary² through

Member States' National Contact Points for eHealth³. Luxembourg, amongst others⁴, already planned to start exchanging patients' summaries with other Member States. However, well-functioning national or regional networks are a prerequisite for connecting Europe. In Estonia for instance, healthcare professionals already use digital solutions to exchange patient medical records with each other. On this basis, they have taken the necessary steps to start exchanging patient prescriptions with Finland from 2020 on.

According to the European Commission, eHealth is "...the use of modern information and communication technologies (ICT) to meet the needs of citizens, patients, healthcare professionals, healthcare providers, as well as policy makers". Similarly, the World Health Organisation defines eHealth as "...the cost-effective and secure use of ICT in support of the health and health-related fields including healthcare, health surveillance and health education, knowledge and research". It should offer new opportunities through artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, 5G or supercomputing and benefit the society and economy as a whole. For example, micro- and nanotechnology has been engaged to develop a sensor for heart monitoring during open heart surgery. Indeed, also by introducing AI in certain healthcare workflows, 10-15% productivity gains are likely to be made/achieved over 2 to 3 years. Even though it is still difficult for caregivers to imagine that engineers might be part of their medical team, they will be integrated as a fully-fledged player and part of a new thinking, providing more than only IT services. It is somewhat a cultural shift but in 2019, the line between ICT and healthcare industries is expected to blur further. Companies like Google and Amazon will be able to transform the "individual care" sector and to get their researchers' solutions into public health systems.⁵

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- 1 Uninterrupted access to medication prescribed in another Member State
- 2 Unrestricted access to the patients' information in any clinical encounter
- 3 In Luxembourg : Service national d'information et de médiation santé ; Caisse nationale de santé.
- 4 Malta, Czech Republic
- 5 Reenita Das, Top 8 Healthcare Predictions for 2019. Forbes, November 13, 2018