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The 2008 Portoroz Declaration

According to participants at the annual EU eHealth 2008 event, which took place at Portoroz, Slovenia from May 6-7, telemedicine and innovative ICT tools for chronic disease management will be the key to delivering people-centered health care. The annual EU eHealth 2008 conference, where stakeholders demonstrated results in the use of information and telecommunication solutions in health care, adopted the Portoroz Declaration as the basis for future work by the EU and its member countries in the field.

With the declaration, adopted on May 7, 2008, the EU 27 Member States and the Commission intend to develop people-centered e-Health initiatives, offering Europeans "smarter health environments" to deliver continuity of care and integrated health and social services.

The declaration identifies three key initiatives that "must now begin to operate harmoniously alongside each other in order to overcome the major health challenges that lie ahead over the next ten-year period". These include:

Ó Plans to deploy telemedicine and innovative ICT tools for chronic disease management. Until the end of 2008, the Commission intends to issue a Communication on this topic. The aim will be to enable Member States to "identify and address possible barriers for wider deployment of telemedicine and to coordinate their efforts".

Ó The need to introduce an enhanced focus on new research opportunities. Exploration of future research and technology development steps in Europe is needed. Government policy-makers are advised to look ahead in a prospective foresight and envisioning exercise in order to understand how new directions in R&D are to affect health policy decisions over a ten-year time horizon.

Ó The need for a transparent legal framework agreed between the Member States in order to define the responsibilities, rights and obligations of all the different subjects involved in the e-Health process (eg. national, regional and local health authorities, health care professionals, patients, insurance companies, and other relevant players). Special attention is directed at exploring the existing Community legislation that influences eHealth significantly, especially the Data Protection Directive, e-Privacy Directive and e-Commerce Directive. This involves an active dialogue and participation of all the relevant national authorities in the area of health, personal data protection, technical harmonisation, standardisation, and eCommerce.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.ehealth2008.si/index.php?id=26&mid=25>

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