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European Industry Responds to Government Action on Telehealth Issue

Upon release of a European Commission Communication on telemedicine, the medical technology industry has voiced their opinion on the future of telehealth.

Led by COCIR, an industry group representing the healthcare IT sector, the industry has made recommendations to the European Commission and Member States for a better deployment of telehealth solutions in aid of the current challenges facing the EU. The five recommendations for deployment are:

- European Commission and Member States to establish an appropriate legal framework with effective transposition at country level;
- Strengthen cooperation between healthcare stakeholders to "best practice health strategies" supporting telehealth adoption in routine clinical practice;
- Finance more and sustainable large-scale projects with health economic evaluation to assess the impact of telehealth solutions;
- Integrate telehealth into existing care delivery structures and ensure interoperability of telehealth solutions; and
- Establish sustainable economic model for telehealth by starting dialogue between healthcare stakeholders.

Highlighting that the current fragmented legal systems limit evolution of IT solutions across the EU, COCIR says that a new legal framework could eliminate current problems in licensing, liability and cross-border jurisdiction. While COCIR has welcomed the recent Commission Communication on the benefits of patients, healthcare and society, COCIR urges telehealth solutions to be developed at EU and national level. They say these solutions are needed to combat growing financial and staff shortages in the European health sector.

The position paper from COCIR warns that Europe's current financial model for healthcare is unsustainable, making telehealth a key area for the future. The group recommends more cooperation between stakeholders to accelerate the adoption of telehealth in practice, as well as more dialogue in order to establish a sustainable economic model for telehealth.

COCIR answers the fear of an increase in telehealth use having a disruptive impact on clinical practice and downgrade the doctor's role, saying telehealth methods will improve detection of diseases, reduce mortality and hospitalisation rates and empower the patients to deal with their conditions.

For more information, please visit: www.cocir.org

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