## eHealth 2006

The eHealth 2006 High Level Conference, held in Malága (Spain) on 10, 11 and 12 May has allowed more than 900 high level politicians and IT and health experts from all over Europe, including some US and Canadian representatives, to share and exchange ideas and initiatives in the eHealth field. The designation of Málaga as the headquarters for eHealth 2006 implied an acknowledgement of the Andalucian Public Health System (SSPA), which received an award from the European Commission in 2003 for its initiatives in digital health.

Under the slogan "eHealth and Health Policies: Synergies for better Health in a Europe of Regions", the fourth edition of this event had the aim of encouraging the implementation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) that are going to make it easier for citizens to gain access to an efficient and quality health system.

As a novelty, and unlike previous years, during this year's eHealth Conference other associated events were held in parallel, such as the *World Panel on Interoperability*, which was attended by experts from the US, Canada and Australia; the *European eHealth Industry Forum*, which had the presence of CEOs from leading companies in the development of information technologies, and the Strategic Regional Forum eHealth 2006, in which public managers for health policies shared their experiences and future expectations.

The different tracks and sessions of the Conference favoured the dissemination of the results of research and technological innovation and allowed the exchange of eHealth experiences between the various European countries and regions.

The eHealth 2006 High Level Conference also offered attendees the opportunity to participate in the strategic seminars prepared with high level experts. Another important novelty compared to previous years were the in situ visits which, within the conference framework, were made to various research centres, hospitals and clinics that are currently developing eHealth tools or putting them into practice, both in Andalucia and in other autonomous regions of Spain.

Among the eHealth initiatives being visited were: the *Advanced Multinational Complex for Technology Simulation and Innovation of the Council of Andalucia* (CMAT), the *Andalusian School of Public Health* (EASP), the central headquarters of the State-Owned Company for Health Emergencies (EPES) and the Hospital of Ciudad Real. Participants could also visit a health centre, a pharmacy and a hospital in Andalucia to take a look at Diraya, a powerful computing system comprising the largest single base of users in Spain. (HH)

**IHE Connect-a-Thon**

Also presented to the European Commission at the eHealth Forum in Malaga were the results of the 2006 IHE Connect-a-thon held in Barcelona on 24-28 April, where over 700 vendor/actor combinations were tested.

Hot topics at the Connect-a-thon were workflow and access to information, security, patient management and document sharing and patient summaries.

67 companies from 15 countries were represented at the Connect-a-thon to test the interoperability of their systems with the full participation of users.

At the Connect-a-thon, 117 systems were interconnected. Vendors could apply for up to 10 'Integration Profiles' in five domains (infrastructure, radiology, laboratory, cardiology and patient care coordination) with each participant playing a certain role (e.g. admitting a patient, printing an image). By the end of the week, more than 700 vendor/actor combinations had been tested, verified and approved, resulting in more than 1600 tests performed.

Despite being leading players in a highly competitive market, vendor cooperation was excellent as the companies aimed for "gold star" ratings. The results will be published in the "Connect-a-thon Results table" on the IHE Europe website www.ihe-europe.org. Vendors may then use the "Integration Statements" to show the compliance of their products with the IHE Integration Profile.