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EU Presidency, Ministers Provide Direction for E-Health

Recognising the efforts that brought EU policy on e-health to the present, EU Ministers and the Spanish Presidency have recommended a plan for the future.

In the Ministerial Declaration of European Co-Operation on ehealth, a detailed framework was set forth in order to achieve the overall objective of enhancing quality and sustainability of healthcare professionals and society. The main points addressed in the declaration included:

- Political and strategic commitment both at the regional and national level, encouraging collaboration with States outside the EU;
- Building confidence and acceptance, focusing on all stakeholders (patients, health providers, authorities and government);
- Bringing legal and ethical clarity and ensuring protection of personal health data;
- Solving interoperability issues, specifically legal, regulatory and organisational barriers to e-health; and
- Linking e-health policy to competitiveness, innovation and research as well as to cohesion and inclusion policies.

In conclusion, the ministers and representatives responsible for ehealth encouraged policy coordination among the various areas of e-health as well as stronger synergies within policy areas like competition, research and regional development. They stressed involving all stakeholders in strategic planning, validation and implementation of e-health solutions and specifically, including e-health within the framework of the European Digital Agenda. Most importantly, they encourage using e-health solutions to improve patient benefits, welcoming more research, innovation and deployment.

In a recent communication, the Spanish Presidency proposed four goals for e-health as part of a wide strategic framework and corresponding action plan:

- Introduce a global vision for an e-health policy totally integrated in the post 2010 European Agenda;
- Drive a new E-Health Action Plan, facing the new European challenges;
- Develop and promote ministerial agreements, in particular regarding integration of e-health in community policy; and
- Implement reinforced government.

The Action Plan will be directed at the current challenges in European healthcare: crises, ageing populations, sustainability and efficiency in the public sector, and economic and social inclusion. The Spanish Presidency hopes to integrate e-health policy in the post 2010 European Agenda, contributing to its main goals of economic recovery, growth and employment and economic, social and territorial cohesion.

For further information, please visit: www.ehealthspain.eu

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