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### European Commission and US Health Department Agree to Promote E-Health Interoperability

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The Vice-President of the European Commission, Neelie Kroes, and United States Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius have signed a Memorandum of Understanding in Washington, to promote a common approach on the interoperability of electronic health records and on education programmes for information technology and health professionals.

The memorandum aims to foster a mutual understanding of the challenges faced by both sides in advancing the effective use of e-health. It outlines areas for cooperation and stresses the need for a joint vision on internationally recognised and utilised interoperability standards for electronic health record systems and increased competences and mobility of IT professionals. It foresees potential activities such as exchanges of information of ongoing projects, exchanges of selected delegations and specialists as well as the establishment of joint working groups to identify specific strategies for achieving shared goals.

The aim of the Memorandum of Understanding is also to create new markets and growth opportunities for industry in the e-health sector in both the EU and the US. The take up in the US of electronic health records outside hospitals is four times lower than in Europe. In the coming years, the US will invest around 20 billion dollars in deploying interoperable health records to physicians. This could have a positive impact on procurement for European companies in the US as well as boosting the Single Market for e-health in the EU. This will give patients better health and quality of life and improve the existing infrastructure of healthcare systems.

Although the agreement has no legal obligations, the development of the partnership between the EU and the US, the two world leaders in e-health, sends a strong signal to all stakeholders that common standards and interoperability bring opportunities for a global approach for the benefit of patients, health systems and the market.

For more information, please visit: [http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/activities/health](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/health)

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