

## European Commission Pledges to Develop Necessary Infrastructure for the Development of E-Health



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The European Commission's Digital Agenda for Europe (DAE) is a flagship initiative of the EU 2020 strategy, focusing on sustainable growth through ICT. The DAE comprises of seven pillars, which encompass issues ranging from developing interoperability and standards to ultra fast Internet access, digital literacy and eGovernment solutions. E-Health is a key element of this agenda and the DAE aims to facilitate the development and growth of ICT in healthcare.

The DAE has already launched a number of pilot initiatives, for example, to equip Europeans with secure online access to their medical health data by 2015 and to achieve widespread deployment of telemedicine services by 2020. Standards and interoperability among IT systems across Member States is another major concern of the DAE, and by 2012 a minimum set of common patient data should be available for interoperable patient records.

The EC invests € 11 billion until 2020 in driving and developing Europe's digital infrastructure. The goal is to raise Internet coverage to 100% by 2013 and to facilitate data exchange at greater than 30 Mbps by 2020. With regards to e-Health, during the ICT 2010 for ICT Research and Innovation: "Digitally Driven" event at the end of September, the European Commission announced close to €200 million funding for 2011 (out of the total €780 million for research in ICT) for health and well-being in an ageing society.

Technological advances mean that patients are becoming more demanding and more investment is needed in healthcare in order to cope with the challenges of an aging population. E-Health solutions such as telemedicine hold the key to the future of healthcare systems and this technology needs to be promoted and supported financially.

According to Flora Girogio of the EC's ICT for Health unit: "The most underused resource in healthcare is the patient and there is a common understanding among Member States that patients have to be empowered". Speaking at the Global e-Health Forum in Hamburg, Giorgio invited delegates to continue the discussion at the e-Health Week 2011, Europe's main annual platform for the advancement of e-Health. The next event will take place in Budapest from May 10-13, 2011, during Hungary's Presidency of the European Union.

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