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My Fundamental Right to Cross-Border Healthcare

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Dear Reader,

Properly working cross-border healthcare is a fundamental right of every European citizen. This goes hand in hand with the free movement of persons.

The European Union has its main focus on IT collaboration with the USA. But HITM feels that this is too narrow. Therefore we have taken the decision to closely collaborate with the Middle East, Africa and Asia. To administer this goal we had to relocate from Belgium to Cyprus, the ideal place to access these emerging areas. The recent Chinese investments into Cyprus prove that we have made the right decision.

Our relocation has highlighted just how difficult it is for citizens to cross borders and ensure their basic rights. There are failings at both a national and European level. Honestly, calculating the obstacles to overcome and the time spent sorting out basic administrative issues underlines that (easy) free movement and cross-border healthcare is still far from being a reality.

Obstacles include not only language barriers but also administrative issues. Europe as much as national governments are still not up to scratch with basics. Boasting electronic passports and even health cards does not help and it is quite disappointing how difficult it is to change country in our digital age.

This experience has strengthened my belief that healthcare IT stakeholders have to do all we can to improve this situation. We must consolidate pilots, projects and other efforts to achieve a functioning, interoperable healthcare system. Not only because it is our basic right but also as it will boost our public healthcare understanding and economy. Let us make the pilots fly!

Pessimists might ask just how many people are crossing borders but this is not the proper argument. Allowing Europeans to freely move countries without bureaucratic obstacles is highly connected to the idea of independent living of the older generation. This should be a core priority.

This brings me to the content of this issue. In our cover story we discuss Data Security, a serious concern in a borderless electronic world. We highlight privacy within the wider perspective of risk management and deal with the legal implications of data security.

Then we look into ownership and protection of data in the use of cloud computing. Cloud, a logic development of the Internet, is not a lawless area but must be secure and safe. We also cover managed service models for IT system purchases and highlight a way to optimise your capital investment.

Our country focus highlights healthcare IT in Spain. Shattered with an unemployment rate of almost 25 percent, we introduce the Spanish Healthcare System and analyse the state of healthcare in Spain. An interview with the President of our Association, Prof. Josep Picas from the University Clinic Sant Pau in Barcelona, completes this Spanish Country Profile.

Last but not least I urge you to support the efforts within the European Association of Healthcare IT Managers to unify healthcare IT in Europe and beyond. Please enjoy reading this latest issue of Healthcare IT Management.

For comments, suggestions and criticism, please contact me at any time.

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