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Safe and Efficient Healthcare Through E-Health

The Health Council adopted, on 1 December 2009, conclusions on safe and efficient healthcare through ehealth. These conclusions recognise "the need for further political leadership and to integrate e-health into health policy in order to develop e-health services on the basis of public health needs". Therefore the Council "invites" the Member States to conceive and implement initiatives aimed at enabling the deployment and use of e-health services, and to "empower a high-level mechanism of governance at EU level".

The Council adopted several conclusions at the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council meeting. They recall that a high level of human health protection needs to be ensured and that cooperation between the Member States to ensure this is encouraged. They emphasise that one of the objectives of the Community health strategy (2008- 2013) is to support dynamic health systems and new technologies and that these technologies can improve prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

The report welcomes recent collaborations between Member States stating the epSOS large scale pilot project (for cross-border interoperability) and the Calliope thematic network (to develop a roadmap for interoperability) as examples. The Council also supports the ongoing cooperation in ehealth standardisation.

The Council recognise the importance of e-health as a tool to improve quality and patient safety and also in the modernisation of national healthcare systems (increasing effectiveness and accessibility) to meet individual patient needs, staff needs and also to meet the challenges of an ageing society.

In conclusion, the Council calls on Member States:

- Ó For political commitment to e-health;
- Ó To build confidence in and acceptance of e-health services;
- Ó To bring legal clarity and ensure protection of health data, and
- Ó To solve technical issues and facilitate market development.

And calls on the Commission to:

- Ó Update the European Action plan on e-health;
- Ó Produce a report on the development of existing EU policies and actions regarding electronic identification management, and
- Ó Organise an evaluation, at appropriate intervals, of the health benefits and cost-effectiveness of the use of different e-health services.

For more information, please visit:

www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/111613.pdf

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