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EU News

Moving Towards E-Health Ecosystems

A declaration by the Irish Presidency of the Council of the EU committing Member States to developing eHealth ecosystems that could contribute to the reform of health systems has been welcomed by European Commission Vice-President for the Digital Agenda Neelie Kroes and Health Commissioner Tonio Borg.

The Irish Presidency presented the Declaration at the Ministerial eHealth High Level Conference, which was held alongside eHealth Week and the World of Healthcare IT in Dublin on May 13th. eHealth ecosystems pool the resources of health and social care providers, industry, research institutions, authorities and end users throughout Europe to accelerate the development and adoption of innovative solutions such as eHealth to specific problems in health and social care.

Neelie Kroes said: "eHealth ecosystems could be the answer to the strain our social security systems are undergoing. If we work together and we use the enormous potential technology has to offer us, we can ensure top healthcare for all in Europe."

Tonio Borg said: "I agree that building ecosystems, bringing together all the different players is a promising way forward. We very much promote this type of approach under the European Union Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy ageing. Here we bring together partners such as industry, health professionals, policy makers, patients and carers to shape innovative solutions."

eHealth ecosystems could, among others, support the health reform process in Europe, help us better understand healthcare needs and make the introduction of new and innovative public/private business models in healthcare easier. They facilitate mutually beneficial research and innovation of the highest quality and may lead to an increased use of new technology and

services that improve patient care.

Ministers agreed that the aims of eHealth ecosystems could be achieved by:

• Strengthening coordination of all policies related to eHealth, from support to research and deployment, to developing a legal framework in specific areas like medical devices, patient safety, information security and interoperability;

• Promoting mutual learning and sharing of good experiences inside ecosystems between purchasers and providers, academia, citizens, industry and throughout the public and private sector health industry;

• Allowing innovative concepts, products and services to create new markets by applying new sets of rules, values and models; and

• Accelerating the implementation of existing and proven devices and processes through intensive innovation techniques and innovative procurement tools to ensure that citizens receive the benefits in a shorter timeframe, by delivering on existing priorities.

Photo: Gerry O'Dwyer, VP EAHM; Dr. James Reilly, Minister for Health, Republic of Ireland;

Edwin Poots, Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Northern Ireland;

Tom Daly, HSE & DG CAWT.

This year's e-Health Week in Dublin showcased the opportunities information technology can bring to both the healthcare sector and the economy as a whole. The Irish Health Minister, James Reilly addressed attendees at the opening ceremony and marvelled at the range of topics and highly specialised sessions in the conference programme. Reilly stressed that e-health is lagging behind other industries and although it is certainly more complex and challenging than other areas of innovation, the potential benefits outweigh the challenges to overcome.

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